

Poulenc

Complete
Chamber
Music

Matteo Fossi
& Various artists



Francis Poulenc 1899-1963

Complete Chamber Music

1. Capriccio d'après le "Bal masqué" FP155 for two pianos	5'10	Sonata FP143 for cello and piano	15. Allegro (Tempo di marcia)	5'37	Sonata FP164 for flute and piano	32. Allegro malinconico	4'51	Sonata FP32 for clarinet and bassoon	46. Allegro (Très rythmé)	1'40
2. L'Embarquement pour Cythère FP150, valse-musette for two pianos	2'19	16. Cavatine	5'41	33. Cantilena	3'48	47. Romance (Andante et très doux)	2'19	48. Finale (Très animé)	2'36	
3. Élégie en accords alternés FP175 for two pianos	6'27	17. Ballabile	3'41	34. Presto giocoso	3'45					
Matteo Fossi . Marco Gaggini <i>pianos</i>		18. Finale	6'27			Claudia Bucchini <i>flute</i> Matteo Fossi <i>piano</i>		Calogero Palermo <i>clarinet</i> Andrea Zucco <i>bassoon</i>		
Sonata FP8 for piano four-hands (revised version, 1939)		Suite française, d'après Claude Gervaise FP80 for cello and piano		35. Villanelle FP74 for recorder and piano	1'35			Sonata FP33 for horn, trumpet and trombone		
4. Prélude	2'32	19. Bransle de Bourgogne	1'28			Claudia Bucchini <i>recorder</i> Matteo Fossi <i>piano</i>		49. Allegro moderato	4'19	
5. Rustique	1'54	20. Pavane	3'07					50. Andante	3'20	
6. Final (très vite)	2'12	21. Petite marche militaire	0'58			Sonata FP185 for oboe and piano		51. Rondeau	1'56	
Federica Ferrati Matteo Fossi <i>piano four-hands</i>		22. Complainte	1'32			36. Élégie (Paisiblement)	5'12			
		23. Bransle de Champagne	2'15			37. Scherzo (Très animé)	3'45	Geremia Iezzi <i>horn</i> Claudio Quintavalla <i>trumpet</i> Fabiano Fiorenzani <i>trombone</i>		
		24. Sicilienne	1'53			38. Déploration (Très calme)	4'17			
		25. Carillon	1'45							
		Vittorio Ceccanti <i>cello</i> Matteo Fossi <i>piano</i>				Domenico Orlando <i>oboe</i> Matteo Fossi <i>piano</i>		Trois mouvements perpétuels FP14 for flute, oboe, English horn, clarinet, bassoon, horn, violin, viola, cello, double-bass		
Sonata FP156 for two pianos		Trio FP43 for piano, oboe and bassoon						52. Assez modéré	1'33	
7. Prologue	6'21	26. Presto	5'30			Sonata FP184 for clarinet and piano		53. Très Modéré	1'47	
8. Allegro molto	5'09	27. Andante	3'42			39. Allegro tristamente	5'02	54. Alerté	3'45	
9. Andante lyrico	6'06	28. Rondo	3'16			40. Romanza	4'34			
10. Epilogue	4'55					41. Allegro con fuoco	3'21			
Marco Gaggini . Matteo Fossi <i>pianos</i>		Domenico Orlando <i>oboe</i> . Andrea Zucco <i>bassoon</i> . Matteo Fossi <i>piano</i>								
Sonata FP119 for violin and piano		Sextet FP100 for piano, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and horn				Calogero Palermo <i>clarinet</i> Matteo Fossi <i>piano</i>		Claudia Bucchini <i>flute</i> Domenico Orlando <i>oboe</i> Stefano Rava <i>English horn</i> Calogero Palermo <i>clarinet</i> Andrea Zucco <i>bassoon</i> Geremia Iezzi <i>horn</i> Duccio Ceccanti <i>violin</i> Edoardo Rosadini <i>viola</i> Lorenzo Così <i>cello</i> Petru L. Horvath <i>double-bass</i> Matteo Fossi <i>conductor</i>		
11. Allegro con fuoco	6'17	29. Allegro vivace	7'42							
12. Intermezzo (Très lent et calme)	6'38	30. Divertissement (Andantino)	4'22			42. Élégie FP168 for horn and piano	8'58			
13. Presto tragico	5'30	31. Prestissimo	5'33							
14. Bagatelle d'après le "Bal masqué" FP60 for violin and piano	2'33	Claudia Bucchini <i>flute</i> Domenico Orlando <i>oboe</i> Calogero Palermo <i>clarinet</i> Andrea Zucco <i>bassoon</i> Geremia Iezzi <i>horn</i> Matteo Fossi <i>piano</i>				Geremia Iezzi <i>horn</i> . Matteo Fossi <i>piano</i>				
Duccio Ceccanti <i>violin</i> Matteo Fossi <i>piano</i>										
						Sonata FP7 for two clarinets				
						43. Presto	1'49			
						44. Andante	2'12			
						45. Vif	1'54			
						Calogero Palermo Jean-Luc Votano <i>clarinets</i>				

Chamber music was for Francis Poulenc “an intermittent phenomenon” produced either under compulsion of “inner necessity” or with a particular player in mind, and it falls into three distinct periods - 1917-39, 1940-1948 and 1956-1962 - when one or other of these forces were at work. The three early sonatas, which belong in the first category, exemplify Poulenc’s predilection for wind instruments which, from an early age, he much preferred to strings, and their “restrained dimensions” follow Debussy’s lead in taking the eighteenth century French sonata as a model. Each is in three movements in ternary and rondo-style format and their “youthful vitality” is characterised by motivic repetition, metrical diversity and dissonance. The *Sonata for Two Clarinets* was one of several works begun (but not necessarily completed) in the three-year period from January 1918 when Poulenc served in the army, fortunately, while the war lasted, far from the front line. Its three fleeting movements show the strong influence of Stravinsky as does the *Sonata for Four Hands* also completed in 1918 (and revised in 1939). The *Sonata for clarinet and bassoon* and *Sonata for horn, trumpet and trombone* (the latter described by Milhaud as “as a true masterpiece”) were both completed in 1922 (to be revised in 1945) but Poulenc postponed their premieres until the following year as he wished to be present at the rehearsals since he considered them “very difficult”, especially the latter in which “the balance between the instruments is fearful”. The *Trio for Oboe Bassoon and Piano*, dedicated to Manuel de Falla to his great delight, was begun in 1924 and completed two years later and in Poulenc’s view was “very much like *Les biches* only better”. During the previous three years Poulenc had taken lessons in counterpoint and harmony from Charles Koechlin, and the *Trio* shows evidence of these, with a more complex structure based on thematic development and modulation and less reliant on motivic repetition. The first movement was apparently meant to evoke a Haydn *Allegro* and the Rondo the scherzo of Saint Saens’ *Piano Concerto No.2* (although the latter is recalled more obviously than the former). In 1932 Poulenc made two arrangements of movements from *Le Bal masque* for baritone and chamber orchestra, first performed that year by his great friend Pierre Bernac - the *Capriccio* for two pianos and the first *Bagatelle* for violin and piano, and in 1934 he produced the charming *Villanelle* for the Australian publisher Louise Hanson Dyer which appeared in a collection of similar pieces for recorder by Milhaud, Rousell Ibert, Auric and others.

The *Sextuor* which he characterised as “chamber music of the most straightforward kind – a homage to the wind instruments which I have loved from the moment I began composing” marks, in its final form, the end of his “first period”. It displays strong affinities with the contemporaneous *Bal Masque* and *Concerto for Two Pianos* while sharing its structure and format with the earlier wind sonatas. Poulenc was however dissatisfied with the piece and withdrew it after the first performance in 1933, only returning to it 1939 when it underwent substantial revisions to produce what he considered to be a “much better” version.

The two string sonatas of the 1940s are works associated with specific individuals – the violinist Ginette Neveu and the cellist Pierre Fournier – both of whom assisted Poulenc in creating the instrumental parts and without whom these works would probably not have existed – particularly the violin sonata, given Poulenc’s stated antipathy to that instrument “in the singular”. He had made at least three previous attempts to write for keyboard and strings but had destroyed the results, so when he began sketching these sonatas in 1940 it was very much in the spirit of hope triumphing over experience. He was anxious to achieve a proper balance between the instruments in the violin sonata, something he believed had been achieved only by Brahms and Debussy. The effect of a “prima donna violin” playing over arpeggiated piano accompaniment made him “want to vomit” (as he colourfully put it) and he took pains to craft specific thematic material appropriate to the character of each instrument to play in alternation. He completed what he described as “the monster” in 1943 but despite the contribution of Neveu who provided many “delicious details” for the violin part he considered it a failure for what he deemed its “artificial pathos”, although the first movement has moments of surprisingly Brahmsian passion. The similarly romantic *Sonata for Cello* was also begun in 1940 but then set aside, and when Poulenc resumed work on it in 1948, it was only out of “admiration and affection” for Pierre Fournier. The two men enjoyed a long performance partnership and in 1956 Poulenc made an arrangement for cello and piano of the 1935 *Suite Francaise*. Originally created as incidental music for Édouard Bourder’s play *La Reine Margo*, each movement is an adaptation of a 16th century dance by Claude Gervaise (apart from *Complainte* which does not have a discernable relationship with any known piece by him). The valse-musette

L'embarquement pour Cythère is also an adaption of music to accompany dramatic action – the 1952 film *Le Voyage en Amérique* – for which Poulenc revisited the carefree style of his youth, conjuring up the popular music of the riverside cafes of his childhood home in Nogent-sur-Marne. The *Sonata for Two Pianos* also from 1952 was written for the American pianists Arthur Gold and Robert Fitzdale and, coming between the *Quatre Motets* and *Ave Verum* and *Le Dialogue des Carmélites*, shares their mood of spirituality, especially in the chorale-like *Andante* which Poulenc considered the “true centre of the work”.

In 1956 after a gap of eight years when he composed no original instrumental chamber music, Poulenc returned in spirit to the works of his “first period” but with their uncomplicated simplicity overlaid with the profundity of experience. In addition to the three late sonatas for wind instruments, he composed two highly contrasting memorials in elegiac form: *Élégie for Horn and Piano* in memory of Dennis Brain, begun the day after Brains’ death in a car accident on 1st September 1957 and *Élégie for Two Pianos* (1958) for his friend and patron Marie Blanche de Polignac. The first is stark and uncompromising and unusually, contains a number of unrelated and undeveloped twelve tone rows – whether Poulenc considered it appropriate in this context or he was simply experimenting is unknown: the second he recommended should be played “as if you were improvising with a cigar in your mouth and a glass of cognac on the piano”. The three wind sonatas are connected thematically (despite being separated by six years) the opening motif of the flute sonata appearing in the second and first movements respectively of those for clarinet and oboe both from 1962. All are suffused with the aura and in some cases musical echoes of *Le Dialogue des Carmélites* and their sense of melancholic resignation is highlighted by the markings for the opening movements of flute and clarinet works – *Allegro malinconico*, *Allegro tristamente* - and in the titles of the outer movements of the oboe sonata – *Élégie* and *Deploration*. The sonatas for clarinet and oboe were dedicated to the memories of Arthur Honegger and Serge Prokofiev respectively but the oboe sonata, with its enigmatic and unresolved ending, became Poulenc’s own memorial as he died suddenly a few weeks after its completion.

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Born in Florence in 1978, **Matteo Fossi** studied piano and chamber music at the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole from his early childhood, graduating from the Ferrara conservatory with top marks. Among his most important teachers were Tiziano Mealli, Piero Farulli, Maria Tipo and Pier Narciso Masi. After graduation he attended master classes with Alexander Lonquich, the Trio di Milano, Mstislav Rostropovich, Maurizio Pollini (at Accademia Chigiana di Siena). Active as a concert performer since a very young age, he is now considered one of the most important Italian chamber music performers. He has long played in a duo with violinist Lorenza Borrani (with whom he distinguished himself in some of the most important international competitions) and in 2005 he graduated from the Accademia di Imola with the Master ‘absolutely best formation of the last decade’ In 1995 he founded the Quartetto Klimt, one of the leading chamber music groups in Italy, and for ten years he has been playing in a piano duo with Marco Gaggini with whom he carried out the first recording ever of Brahms’s, Bartók’s and Schoenberg’s works for two pianos. With these formations, and as a soloist, Fossi has performed in all the most significant musical seasons in Italy and abroad, in important theatres and festivals in Germany, France, England, Austria, Spain, Belgium, Poland, Switzerland, the United States, Brazil, China and South Korea. He regularly collaborates with international artists, and records for Nimbus, Decca, Brilliant, Universal, Hortus, Amadeus, Unicef, and Naxos. He also teaches piano at the

Conservatorio 'R.Franci' in Siena and chamber music at the Scuola Di Musica di Fiesole. Matteo has developed a great interest in spreading the word of good music around. As an outcome of this commitment he was one of the founders and is currently the Artistic Director of the Association 'Nuovi Eventi Musicali', inviting and playing with great musicians like Sofia Gubaidulina, Mstislav Rostropovich, Mauricio Kagel, Krisztof Penderecki, Kronos Quartet, Irina Schnittke, Alexander Ivashkin, Boris Berman, Valery Polyansky, Suzanne Linke, Antony Pay.



All biographies are available on the website www.brilliantclassics.com

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