

Cedille Records
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20TH CENTURY FRENCH WIND TRIOS

GEORGES AURIC

JOSEPH CANTELOUBE

JEAN FRANÇAIX

JACQUES IBERT

DARIUS MILHAUD

PAUL PIERNÉ

ALEXANDRE TANSMAN



THE CHICAGO
CHAMBER MUSICIANS

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Jean Françaix: Divertissement (10:12)

- 1 I. Prélude (3:12) 2 II. Allegretto assai (1:56) 3 III. Elégie (2:29) 4 IV. Scherzo (2:27)

Darius Milhaud: Suite d'après Corrette (8:50)

- 5 I. Entrée et Rondeau (1:22) 6 II. Tambourin (0:26) 7 III. Musette (0:48) 8 IV. Sérénade (1:05)
9 V. Fanfare (0:36) 10 VI. Rondeau (0:56) 11 VII. Menuets (2:20) 12 VIII. Le Coucou (0:59)

Joseph Canteloube: Rustiques (16:00)

- 13 I. Pastorale (5:53) 14 II. Rêverie (6:21) 15 III. Rondeau à la française (3:38)

Alexandre Tansman: Suite pour Trio D'Anches (11:45)

- 16 I. Dialogue (2:06) 17 II. Scherzino (2:27) 18 III. Aria (3:35) 19 IV. Finale (3:26)

Jacques Ibert: Cinq pièces en trio (7:32)

- 20 I. Allegro vivo (0:56) 21 II. Andantino (1:51) 22 III. Allegro assai (0:48)
23 IV. Andante (2:22) 24 V. Allegro quasi marziale (1:24)

25 Paul Pierné: Bucolique variée (7:57)**26 Darius Milhaud: Pastorale (3:49)****Georges Auric: Trio (11:35)**

- 27 I. Décidé (3:57) 28 II. Romance (2:43) 29 III. Final (4:47)

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20th Century French Wind Trios

Notes by Andrea Lamoreaux

“His music is characterized by an engaging spontaneity and great technical proficiency. It is often witty . . . not self-consciously neo-classic, but marked on the whole by a classical restraint and sobriety — in a word, by those qualities of clarity, proportion, and elegance which have always been the hallmark of the Gallic spirit in the arts.”

— Critic Rollo Myers on Jean Françaix

Professor Myers might well have been writing about all of the composers represented on this CD, not just Françaix, especially in his references to wit and spontaneity, and to the restraint that takes its inspiration from 18th-century Classicism, rather than the 19th-century Romantic age. Above all stands out that word “clarity,” so often used to describe the music of France. The fondness for woodwinds that so many French composers have shown may be accounted for in part by this paramount desire to achieve clarity of sound, expression, and tone color.

Jean Françaix (b. 1912) was still a schoolchild in the early 1920s, when Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and others were radically transforming the sounds and styles of music. A graduate of the Paris Conservatory, Françaix also studied with Nadia Boulanger, the famous and highly influ-

ential teacher of numerous aspiring European and American composers (including Aaron Copland, David Diamond, and Easley Blackwood). First achieving fame at age 20 with his *Concertino for Piano and Orchestra*, Françaix has gone on to write music for ensembles large and small, for voices, and for solo instruments.

The Schott music publishers have issued a complete catalog of Françaix’s works, with an anonymous biographical note as introduction. The unknown author writes: “[Françaix’s] works are typically French — they have charm, spirit, and grace; they are often touched by irony . . . they show their creator’s innate sense of humor . . . [it is the work of one] who, through his cultured conception of the musical art, is a spiritual brother to Debussy and Ravel.”

Divertissement (Entertainment) would be an appropriate title for most of Françaix’s works. In this case, it is a four-movement, three-sided conversation that goes through various topics and climates: a moderately-paced opening, a succeeding section of complex and competitive character, a brief lament, and a light-hearted, virtuosic conclusion.

“Others write music to express them-

selves,” Aaron Copland once said; “Milhaud, like no other composer I know, writes music to celebrate life itself.” We can imagine that Darius Milhaud (1892–1974) would have enjoyed the exuberant song “L’Chaim” (To Life) from *Fiddler on the Roof*, because it would speak to the Jewish heritage that was so important to him, and for its theme of cheerful courage in the face of adversity — an attitude that characterized his own outlook. Milhaud was bedeviled by poor health for most of his life, but did not let that prevent him from composing hundreds of works; multifarious scores in many different styles for the stage, films, voices, orchestras, chamber groups, and keyboards made him one of the most prolific composers of the 20th century. And he was able to work productively anywhere: Paris, his beloved native Provence, South America, or California, which became his home for several years after his emigration from World War II France.

Milhaud and Georges Auric (also featured on this disc) were members of *Les Six*, a group of young, iconoclastic composers who emerged in Paris in the 1920s, voicing opposition to the music of France’s past: in their words, “the eloquence of Franck, the impressionism of Debussy, and the scholasticism of D’Indy.” The other members of this famous sextet were Francis Poulenc, Arthur Honegger, Germain Tailleferre, and Louis Durey. They

experimented with all kinds of musical endeavor, from opera to jazz; they defied convention and took special pleasure in shocking — exhibiting an attitude Prokofiev called (in reference to his own music) “teasing the geese.”

Milhaud’s wind trios, the *Pastorale* and the *Suite d’après Corrette*, do not share the aggressive modernism preached by *Les Six*; they reveal instead the composer’s firm roots in the musical past, and his interest in both folk music and the composers of the French Baroque. The *Suite* originated as music for a French-language production of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, staged in Paris in 1937. Milhaud’s inspiration was the early 18th-century composer Michel Corrette. In its non-stage form the music takes the shape of a neo-Baroque suite of dance pieces, interspersed with self-described sections such as the *Fanfare*, the gentle *Serenade*, and the graphic *Cuckoo* finale. The tiny *Pastorale* is a kind of miniature prelude and fugue in which the oboe takes the leading role; its mood and atmosphere are amply described by the title.

The French pastoral tradition is also represented in the trio by Joseph Canteloube (1879–1957), whose art took its inspiration from his country’s history and folklore, particularly that of his native region, the district of south-central France known as the Auvergne. Like

Bartók and Kodály in Hungary, and Ralph Vaughan Williams in England, Canteloube traversed the countryside noting down traditional songs and dance tunes. His arrangements were published in several collections called *Songs of the Auvergne*.

As an anonymous biographical note in Grove's Dictionary of Music declares, "[Canteloube's] settings of folksongs . . . have gained widespread favor, but his original works have been neglected." The Chicago Chamber Musicians remedy this situation somewhat with *Rustiques*, a three-movement evocation of the riches of Gallic folk music every bit as eloquent in the instrumental realm as the Auvergne songs are in the vocal. Especially lovely is the central *Réverie* that recalls the limpid serenity of a favorite among the songs, *Bailerò* (Shepherd's Melody).

All of the composers on this recording were born in France except Alexandre Tansman (1897–1986), a native of Poland who attended the Lodz Conservatory and Warsaw University before moving to Paris in 1919, where he became part of Milhaud's circle. He also befriended another emigré musician, Igor Stravinsky (Tansman published a biography of Stravinsky in 1948). While Tansman was more famous as a concert pianist and conductor than as a composer, his list of works is lengthy and varied, including film music from his sojourn in the United

States during World War II.

Like Stravinsky's music, Tansman's *Suite pour Trio d'Anches* (Suite for Wind Trio) places great emphasis on the element of rhythm. Laid out in four short movements arranged slow-fast-slow-fast in the manner of a Baroque trio sonata, the *Suite* features frequent ostinatos (repeated rhythmic figures) and passages contrasting slow-moving patterns with rapid ones. Movement titles are self-descriptive. Particularly moving is the *Aria*, which is highlighted by a wandering, mournful oboe melody.

Jacques Ibert (1890–1962) was a central and highly influential figure in French musical life during the first half of the 20th century whose music has survived in the repertoires of both orchestras and chamber groups. A decorated officer in the French Navy during World War I, Ibert made his name between the wars as a composer of operas and symphonic works (notable among the latter is *Escales*, Ports of Call, inspired by his seafaring experiences), and also explored the then-new world of film music. In 1937, he became director of the French Academy in Rome, a post he held until 1960 — except for the World War II years, when he was *persona non grata* to both Mussolini and the Vichy regime. Ibert's most famous composition for winds is his *Trios pièces brèves* for woodwind quintet. No less

sparkling are the miniatures he titled *Cinq pièces en trio*. Contrasting fast and slow tempos, the pieces present inviting tunes intricately intertwined up and down the entire range of the instruments. The *quasi marziale* finale is a very jolly march, with a folk-like theme that suggests more a hike in the country than a military parade.

The Chicago Chamber Musicians' journey through modern French wind trios began with a virtual "mystery" composer: the nearly forgotten Paul Pierné (1874–1952), a younger contemporary of Debussy, and cousin to the better-known Gabriel Pierné. A graduate of the Paris Conservatory, winner of the prestigious Prix de Rome, and longtime organist at Paris's Church of St. Paul and St. Louis, Paul Pierné wrote operas, symphonic poems, songs, and — naturally — quite a bit of organ music. Despite his productivity, virtually none of his music survives in the standard repertory.

Pierné's *Bucolique variée* gives a simple, lyrical melody first to the bassoon, then the oboe, with the clarinet providing commentary; the theme is varied with increasingly complex melodic figurations and rhythmic patterns, until simplicity returns at the end. The word *Bucolique* may be translated as Pastoral Piece.

Georges Auric (1899–1983) was, like Tansman, closely associated with Stravin-

sky, and also played a major role in the history of French movie-making, composing several scores for films by Jean Cocteau. A sort of junior member of *Les Six* — Milhaud, Poulenc, and Honegger are viewed as the group's most significant figures — Auric combined a distinguished career as a music critic with his work as a composer. He has several ballets to his credit, plus orchestral pieces, numerous songs, and quantities of piano and chamber music.

The clarinet takes the initial lead in the dancing, vibrantly rhythmic first movement of Auric's 1938 *Trio*. The very lyrical Romance combines the instruments with intertwining melodies; the word *expressif* and the dynamic marking *piano* (soft) pepper the movement's final pages. The final portion of the trio contrasts playful triplet patterns with quieter, more sedate interludes.

Andrea Lamoreaux is Programming Executive at Fine Arts Station WFMT-FM in Chicago.



Chicago Chamber Musicians members Michael Henoch, oboe (left); Larry Combs, clarinet (center), and William Buchman, bassoon (right).

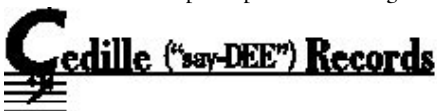
About the Musicians

The Chicago Chamber Musicians (CCM) was founded in 1986 for the purpose of building an internationally-recognized Chicago institution devoted to chamber music. The group continues to win critical and popular acclaim for the quality and diversity of its musical activities — from an annual subscription series, summer Ravinia Festival performances, and international tours, to numerous local outreach programs that bring chamber music performances to non-traditional venues. Currently, CCM serves over 50,000 people annually in Chicago through its many programs. Performing on this CD are CCM members Michael Henoeh, oboe; Larry Combs, clarinet; and William Buchman, bassoon.

In 1972, while still a student at Northwestern University, Michael Henoeh was appointed Assistant Principal Oboe of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra by Sir Georg Solti. Before that, Mr. Henoeh performed with Lyric Opera of Chicago for three seasons while concurrently earning his bachelor's and master's degrees in music (both with highest honors). As a soloist, he made his Carnegie Hall debut in 1970 with the New York String Orchestra and has since performed with many orchestras and conductors including Sir Georg Solti, Daniel Barenboim, and David Zinman. Mr. Henoeh is artistic co-director of CCM.

A founding member of CCM, Chicago Symphony Orchestra Principal Clarinet Larry Combs' musical career spans over four decades. Previously with the orchestras of New Orleans and Montreal and the Santa Fe Opera, Mr. Combs joined the Chicago Symphony in 1978. He has since performed as soloist with the orchestra numerous times. Combs has appeared in recent sessions with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and the Smithsonian Chamber Ensemble. In 1994, an ensemble comprising Combs, Daniel Barenboim, and members of the orchestras of Chicago and Berlin received the Grammy award for Best Chamber Music Performance for their CD of music by Mozart and Beethoven.

Winner of the 1990 Fernand Gillet Young Artist Competition of the International Double Reed Society, William Buchman has been Assistant Principal Bassoon with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra since 1992. He attended Brown University, the Yale School of Music, and the University of Southern California School of Music, and then became Second Bassoon in the Dallas Symphony. Mr. Buchman has been a regular guest of Chicago Pro Musica and has participated in the Tanglewood Music Center Festival.



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