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TRAINS OF THOUGHT

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POULENC TRIO



TRAINS OF THOUGHT

FRANCIS LOULENC: Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano

VIET CUONG: Trains of Thought*

**DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH: Romance from *The Gadfly* ♦ A Spin Through
Moscow from *Moscow, Cheryomushki***

JEAN FRANÇAIX: Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano

GIOACCHINO ROSSINI: Fantaisie Concertante on Themes from *Semiramide*

*World Premiere Recording

Total Playing Time: 58:31

POULENC TRIO

Irina Kaplan Lande, piano

Liang Wang, oboe

Bryan Young, bassoon

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FRANCIS POULENC (1899-1963)
Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano 12:13

1. **Lent – Presto** (5:14)
2. **Andante** (3:48)
3. **Rondo** (3:11)

VIET CUONG (b. 1991)
(World Premiere Recording)

4. **Trains of Thought** (12:18)

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)
Arr. for Poulenc Trio by Anatoly Trofimov

5. **Romance, Op. 97 a** (from the film score of *The Gadfly*) (3:05)
6. **A Spin Through Moscow** (from the operetta *Moscow, Cheryomushki*) (2:12)

JEAN FRANÇAIX (1912-1997)
Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano (1994)
16:06

7. **Adagio-Allegro molto** (3:47)
8. **Scherzo** (3:45)
9. **Andante** (4:24)
10. **Finale** (4:10)

GIOACCHINO ROSSINI (1792-1868)
Arr. Charles Triébert and Eugene Jancourt

11. **Fantaisie Concertante on Themes from *Semiramide*** (12:17)

Total Playing Time: (58:31)

"Above all, a composer should not aim to be fashionable. If you are not fashionable today, you may not be unfashionable tomorrow." —Francis Poulenc

F Francis Poulenc was born in Paris on January 7, 1899, and attained both a distinct musical voice and professional success at an early age. During the 1920s, he was one of the leading spirits in a group of young French composers known as Les Six, whose music was often light, witty, satirical, and urbane. Les Six sympathized with and were influenced by Satie, Stravinsky and neoclassicism, and were opposed to the cerebral music of Schoenberg and to what they considered the religio-musical excesses of their countryman Olivier Messiaen. Poulenc, in particular, often juxtaposed passages of wit and irony with lush, sentimental outpourings.

Poulenc composed orchestral works, chamber music, ballets, concertos, film scores, and operas, as well as powerful choral and sacred music. The most important musical element to Poulenc was melody, and he is an acknowledged master of French art songs, with more than 130 songs to his credit. Norbert Dufourcq writes that Poulenc "found his way to a vast treasury of undiscovered tunes within an area that had, according to the most up-to-date musical maps, been sur-

veyed, worked and exhausted." Of his own work, Poulenc wrote, "I know perfectly well that I'm not one of those composers who have made harmonic innovations like Igor [Stravinsky], Ravel, or Debussy, but I think there's room for 'New' music which doesn't mind using other people's chords. Wasn't that the case with Mozart-Schubert?"

The *Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano*—one of Poulenc's most popular chamber works—is in the spirit of an eighteenth-century divertissement: light and witty, yet spiced with dissonances. Though the combination of instruments is unusual, it is eminently logical, combining and contrasting the two members of the double-reed family with the percussive quality of the piano. While composing the Trio in Cannes in 1926, Poulenc took the advice of Ravel (with whom he had been studying) and based the opening Presto on a Haydn Allegro. The closing Rondo's refrain begins as a near perfect quote of a well-known Beethoven melody until it makes a surprising turn into the fresh vocabulary of Poulenc's own distinctive language. Poulenc hinted that he patterned this movement after a piano concerto by Saint-Saëns. The Andante is gracefully Mozartean, though any suggestion of parody is dispelled by alluring shifts of tonality and chromaticism. The Trio is dedicated to Man-

uel de Falla, whom Poulenc had met at the home of his teacher Ricardo Vines in 1918. David Ewen writes, "Pictorially one is sometimes reminded of a chase, sometimes a dialogue. Normally, however, the main musical discourse is entrusted to the piano, while the bassoon is relegated to the role of a discreet commentator and the oboe is allowed to intensify the more lyrical flights. The very heart of Poulenc is in this adroit little work."

—Joseph Way

Called "alluring" and "wildly inventive" by *The New York Times*, **Viet Cuong's** music seeks to "leave you breathless" (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*) by finding ways to introduce new life into time-honored musical ideas. He is a winner of the ASCAP Morton Gould Composers Award, Suzanne and Lee Ettelson Composers Award, and Theodore Presser Foundation Music Award, among many other honors. The Poulenc Trio met Viet at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, and asked him to write ***Trains of Thought*** in 2012. The composer describes his work thusly:

"My goal in writing *Trains of Thought* was to aurally bring life to the mind's stream of consciousness. Ideas are usually interconnected in the mind through a cohesive sequence of

events, but their journeys and destinations can be unpredictable. In this way, the piece deals with the listener's expectations and attempts to convincingly manipulate them. As the mind deviates from and returns to an original idea, the idea's return is often informed by its travels. References to the exciting kinetic energy of an actual locomotive can be heard."

In the composer's performance notes for the oboe and bassoon, he explains that arrows attached to various accidentals throughout the piece indicate "timbral" notes that are slightly higher in pitch than the normally fingered notes. These are not meant to be exact microtones; they are merely more brightly colored tones. However, these timbral notes should still be quite distinguishable from the normal notes.

For the pianist, the composer writes that certain note-heads in the music indicate notes where the pianist momentarily dampens the string inside the piano with the idle hand. The resulting attack and tone should be softened and dull. The string should not be dampened so much as to obscure the pitch.

Trains of Thought was premiered by the Poulenc Trio at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., in May 2017, accompa-

nied by an original animated multimedia film by visual artists Elizabeth and Alden Phelps.

In a musical career spanning half a century, **Dmitri Shostakovich** composed in a staggeringly diverse range of genres and styles. Beyond his fifteen symphonies and fifteen string quartets, Shostakovich also wrote lesser-known works that offer much of the intrigue and interest found in his better-known pieces. With the reappraisal of Shostakovich in recent times, his light music is beginning to enjoy unprecedented popularity in concert halls and record catalogues.

The Gadfly (1955) is probably Shostakovich's best-known film score. The film is based on a novel by Ethel Lilian Voynich and tells a story of faith, disillusionment, revolution, romance, and heroism. Set in 1840s Italy under the dominance of Austria, a time of tumultuous revolt and uprisings, the story centers on the illegitimate son of a cardinal who joins the fight to unite Italy. When caught, he faces the firing squad as a willing martyr.

The Gadfly was an exceptionally popular novel when it was published in the Soviet Union, exerting a considerable cultural influence. The book was compulsory reading in the Soviet Union, was the top best-seller

by the time of Voynich's death, and is estimated to have sold 2,500,000 copies in the Soviet Union alone. "**Romance**" is the most famous movement from Shostakovich's film score and was used in the BBC/PBS TV series *Reilly, Ace of Spies*.

Moscow, Cheryomushki (1958) is a three-act comic operetta in a bewildering variation of styles, from the Romantic idiom to the most vulgar popular songs. The satirical plot deals with one of the most pressing concerns for urban Russians of the day: the chronic housing shortage and the difficulties of securing livable conditions. "Cheryomushki" translates to "bird-cherry trees," the name of a real housing estate in southwest Moscow. "**A Spin Through Moscow**" is the first of the four dancelike movements found in the orchestral suite from the operetta.

Jean Françaix was a French composer very much in the neoclassical tradition of Poulenc: He eschewed the trends of atonality and the rejection of traditional form, choosing wit, color, and a supple lightness in the service of producing musical "pleasure." Prolific throughout his life, Françaix was a piano virtuoso, an active performer, a skilled orchestrator, and a composer in myriad forms and for myriad ensembles. Like many great

French composers, Françaix had a skillful penchant for the wind instruments.

The **Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano** was commissioned by the International Double Reed Society for their twenty-fourth Festival in 1994. The Trio is astonishing for its modernity and its accessibility. In the tradition of neoclassicism, the music recalls familiar works from the past, yet also sounds new and different, undeniably of the present. But where the original neoclassicists looked to the eighteenth century and earlier for their inspiration, Françaix, in this work, seems to look back within his own lifetime. In a new loop of neoclassical spirit, the music evokes the popular sounds of a young modernism in the early twentieth century: syncopated urban rhythms, musical theater, and the exuberance and occasional plaintive nostalgia of contemporary society. The composition's strengths are its exquisite detail and complexity, the virtuosic demands placed on the performers, and the expert use of the idiomatic qualities of the instruments.

Françaix's thoughts are as refreshing as his music:

"It's difficult for a composer to talk about his own works. If he praises them, he is accused of boasting; if he disparages them, he is con-

sidered guilty of false modesty. If he dissects them into theme A and theme B, musicologists will applaud, but musicians will find him boring. If the work is of any value, it will need no explanation; if it is of no value, no esoteric commentary will render it any better . . . All I ask my listeners is to open their ears and be brave enough to decide whether they like my music or not. I don't want any intermediary between me and my listeners trying to sway their judgment one way or the other. They should remember they are free human beings, not obedient automata. I want them to crush snobbery, fashion and envy with the power of common sense and to enjoy my music if it gives them pleasure; which of course I hope it does."

—Adapted from a text by Kai Christensen,
Earsense.org

This ***Fantaisie Concertante*** (Concert-Fantasy) is based on tunes from **Gioacchino Rossini's** last Italian opera, ***Semiramide***, and is taken from a collection of delightful opera-inspired arrangements dating from nineteenth-century Paris and the salon music of that time. These works were not only "tuneful" but enabled the performers to show off their ample virtuosity as well. Charles Triébert was a virtuoso oboist and

professor of oboe at the Paris Conservatoire. His colleague Eugene Jancourt was a bassoonist and composer.

Semiramide is based on Voltaire's tragedy *Semiramis*, which in turn was based on the legend of Queen Semiramis of Babylon. The noted Italian musicologist Rodolfo Celletti called it "the last opera of the great Baroque tradition: the most beautiful, the most imaginative, possibly the most complete; but also, irremediably, the last."

(Ed. Note: Unless otherwise credited above, program notes are by Bryan Young.)

In 2003, pianist Irina Kaplan Lande founded the **Poulenc Trio**, now one of the world's most prominent piano-wind trios. Since then, the ensemble has performed in 45 states and at music festivals around the world, including the Ravello Festival in Italy, the San Miguel de Allende Festival in Mexico, and the White Nights Festival in Russia, where the group toured with and premiered two new works with violinist Hilary Hahn.

In a recent review, *The New York Times* praised the Trio for its "elegant rendition" of music by Piazzolla. *The Washington Post* said the Trio "does its namesake proud" in "an in-

triguing and beautifully played program" with "convincing elegance, near effortless lightness and grace." A recent performance in Florida—for which the *Palm Beach Post* praised the group's "polished loveliness" and the *Palm Beach Daily News* said the "potent combination" of oboe, bassoon, and piano had "captured the magic of chamber music"—is regularly rebroadcast on American Public Media's *Performance Today*, a nationally syndicated radio program. The Trio has also garnered positive attention in full-length profiles by *Chamber Music* magazine and the *Double Reed Journal*. In one profile for Russian television, the group has been called "virtuosos of classical and contemporary chamber music."

The ensemble has a strong commitment to commissioning, performing, and recording new works from living composers. Since its founding, the Trio has greatly expanded the repertoire available for the oboe, bassoon, and piano, with 24 new works written for and premiered by the group, including three triple concertos for trio and full orchestra.

The Trio has also made a commitment to explore and promote music that reflects its members' African, Asian, Eastern European, and Jewish roots. Recent concerts have featured works by Afro-Cuban jazz great



Paquito D’Rivera, Mexican-American composer Carlos Medina, Vietnamese-American composer Viet Cuong, and pieces from Yiddish Lexicon, an exploration of Jewish culture by composer Jakov Jakoulov.

The Trio launched a pioneering concert series called Music at the Museum, in which musical performances are paired with museum exhibitions, with special appearances from guest artists and curators. As part of the series, the Trio has collaborated with the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., the Walters Art Museum and Baltimore Museum of Art and the Hermitage State Museum in Russia. Guest artist collaborators have included violinist Hilary Hahn, the Thibaud Trio of Berlin, soprano Hyunah Yu, and clarinetists Alexander Fiterstein and Anthony McGill.

The group is deeply engaged in musical and educational outreach programs, including Pizza and Poulenc, an informal performance and residency series for younger audiences around the United States. The Trio regularly conducts masterclasses, with recent engagements at the University of Ohio, San Francisco State University, Florida State University, and the University of Colima in Mexico.

As of this release, the Poulenc Trio’s latest collaboration is *Trains of Thought: Animated*, a

mixed-media project featuring a beautifully hand-animated film by artists Elizabeth and Alden Phelps, paired with the commissioned work by Viet Cuong, which premiered in Washington, D.C., at the National Gallery in 2017 (go to delosmusic.com/recording/trains-of-thought to view the film).

In 2016, *Creation* (DE 3516), the ensemble’s first project for Delos, debuted at #4 on Apple Music’s iTunes Classical Music playlist and garnered high praise from *American Record Guide* for the group’s technique and expressive range. The CD also features poet and Guggenheim Fellow Lia Purpura, with a reading of her poems set against Schnittke’s *Suite in the Old Style*.

A graduate of St. Petersburg Conservatory, founding member **Irina Kaplan Lande** was trained in that school’s famous tradition of piano playing.

She is a longtime faculty member at the Peabody Institute, teaching piano and chamber music, and has served on the faculties of the College of Notre Dame and Towson University.

Irina is Artistic Director of the Candlelight Concert Society, where she conceives and implements the artistic vision for the series

by attracting outstanding musicians, maintaining artistic excellence, fostering creative diversity, and building the organization's reputation as an internationally recognized music presenter.

In her free time she loves to ski in the winter and forage for mushrooms in the summer.

Liang Wang is the principal oboist of the New York Philharmonic. Mr. Wang was recently named "The artist of the year" by the Beijing International Music Festival. He was born in Qing Dao, China, and studied at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing and at California's Idyllwild Arts Academy. He received his bachelor's degree from Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with Richard Woodhams.

He has won awards at the Spotlight Competition of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, as well as at the Pasadena Instrumental, Ferdinand Gillet International Oboe, and Tilden Prize competitions. He has twice received the Los Angeles Philharmonic Fellowship.

He is currently on the faculty at New York University and Manhattan School of Music, and has been named honorary professor at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing.

In 2015, Liang Wang became a permanent member of the Poulenc Trio.

Bassoonist **Bryan Young** has been a winner and finalist in many international competitions, including the Gillet International Bassoon Competition and the ARD International Competition in Munich. *The Washington Post* writes that his playing "dances with a lightness and grace uncommon for his instrument," and the *Baltimore Sun* has praised his "particularly beautiful playing, agility and understated elegance." Bryan serves as the principal bassoonist of the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra and is a former member of the IRIS Orchestra in Memphis.

In addition to his musical activities, Bryan is the former leader of Intertwine Systems, a software company that he founded. As a technologist, Bryan worked with Johns Hopkins University and the government of Trinidad and Tobago to develop new research tools for endocrinologists. Bryan is a partner and principal technology advisor to SailTime, the world's largest fractional sailing company, and Joblybe, an Austin, Texas-based startup focused on business communications.

Bryan writes about music, medicine, culture, and technology at his blog, Amalgamated Humanity.

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