



SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Presents

Lucas Lynn, Clarinet
Dr. Cecilia Lo-Chien Kao, Piano

April 5th, 2024

5:00 PM

PepsiCo Recital Hall

Program

Thème et Variations

Jean Françaix
(1912-1997)

Dr. Cecilia Lo-Chien Kao, Piano

Jazz Set for Solo Clarinet

I: Moderato
II: Free
III: Swinging

William O. Smith
(1926-2020)

Intermission

Clarinet Concerto no. 1 in C minor, Op. 26

I: *Adagio-Allegro*
II: *Adagio*
III: *Rondo (Vivace)*

Louis Spohr
(1784-1859)

Dr. Cecilia Lo-Chien Kao, Piano

Sextet in C Major, Op. 37

III: Allegro con sentimento
IV: Allegro vivace, giocoso

Ernst von Dohnányi
(1877-1960)

James Brandt, Horn
Daniela Vallejo, Violin

Jasmine Ong, Viola
Riley Kee, Cello
Elijah Ong, Piano

Lucas is a student of Dr. Corey Mackey.
The use of recording equipment or taking photographs is prohibited.
Please silence all electronic devices including watches, pagers, and phones.

Program Notes:

Françaix, *Thème et Variations*:

Jean René Désiré Françaix (1912-1997) was born into a musical family in the city of Le Mans, in the northwest of France. A young genius, he began composing at age six, and went on to study music, first at the Le Mans Conservatory, then the world-renowned Paris Conservatory. Françaix studied with famed teacher Nadia Boulenger, joining the list of notable students next to Leonard Bernstein and Igor Stravinsky. In addition to his compositional skills, he was also an extremely proficient pianist, often touring as both composer and performer with names like cellist Maurice Gendron and Francis Poulenc.

Written for the Paris Conservatory annual competition of 1974, this work is in the form of a theme and six variations. The theme, built around the name of his son Olivier, is stated in the first section, and each subsequent section adds rhythmic, harmonic, or melodic changes or embellishments. The primary theme is made up of two sections: a seven-beat pattern with a rest at the beginning, and the pitches Do-Fa-Re. The piece is meant to be playful, without any hint of austerity, to appeal to Françaix' then very young son. It often uses unbalanced time signatures and off-beat accents to disallow rest or closure until the very end, when it comes as a surprise.

Smith, *Jazz Set for Solo Clarinet*:

William "Bill" Overton Smith (1926-2020) was an American Jazz composer, band leader, and virtuoso clarinetist known for his innovative compositional ideas and his pioneering efforts towards extended techniques on the clarinet. Some of these techniques include playing two clarinets at once, blowing into the mouthpiece as one would a flute, and playing multiple different notes on the same clarinet, or multiphonics. He is best known for his work with Dave Brubeck and his compositions for clarinet like his *Five Pieces for Solo Clarinet*.

The *Jazz Set for Solo Clarinet* (1981) combines his jazz experience with the strict serialism of composers popular in Smith's youth like Schoenberg and Webern, who codified a way of writing called *Twelve-tone serialism*. In this technique, the twelve notes of the chromatic scale are placed in an order of the composer's choosing and a piece is based on the resulting intervallic pattern. Smith uses this technique for the *Jazz Set*, implementing the pattern in many forms; sometimes it is played in reverse, or transposed into a different starting note, or both at the same time. The composer seems to use the jazz elements of the piece to distract the listener from the atonal nature of the piece, often emphasizing rhythmic and dynamic gestures to obfuscate the strict and unrelenting pitch content. This piece also features several extended techniques, notably in movements two

and four. In movement two, the notes are given a sort of artificial vibrato by repeatedly performing a technique called a timbral trill. In the fourth, the clarinet is reduced to an accompaniment role while the voice takes over to sing the melody.

Spohr, *Concerto no. 1 in C minor, op. 26:*

Louis Spohr (1784-1859) was a popular German composer, conductor, and violinist who was very influential in his lifetime, often mentioned in the same breath with the likes of Beethoven and Carl Maria von Weber. He is credited with several musical innovations such as the violin chinrest and the orchestra rehearsal mark. His compositional career was quite prolific, including ten symphonies, ten operas, eighteen violin concertos, dozens of chamber works, and, of course, his four clarinet concertos.

His first clarinet concerto (arguably his most popular) is notable for several innovations. Spohr, as a virtuoso instrumentalist himself, wrote difficult scalar and arpeggiated passages at fast tempos that are difficult even on modern instruments. In 1812, Johann Simon Hermstedt (the clarinetist for whom it was written) found it nearly impossible for the five-keyed instrument upon which he usually played. Instead of having Spohr rewrite it to be easier, Hermstedt built a new clarinet with an additional eight keys to accommodate the rapid motion. This piece is notable for its unusual endings, as each movement tends to end in an unexpected way which sets up the mood of the following movement. The last movement, *Rondo Vivace*, is almost moto-perpetuo style in that the clarinetist plays constant sixteenth-notes that hide the strong beats of each measure. In contrast with many other concerti from this period, this last movement ends with a slow, plodding cadence in the home key of C minor, allowing the energy to settle and ease the audience after such a rush of energy.

Dohnányi, *Sextet in C major, op. 37, mvmts III & IV:*

Ernst von Dohnányi (1877-1960) was an incredibly influential Hungarian conductor, pianist, organist, and composer who had a great love for the Romantic composers from just before his time; much of his style is compared to that of Liszt, Brahms, and Reger. A somewhat controversial figure during his life, he was often on the wrong side of whatever group happened to be in control of Hungary at the time, be it the Germans during WWII or the Soviets during the Cold War. In 1949, he left his post at the Budapest Academy of Music to teach at Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida, USA. It is there, after ten years as conductor and teacher, that he is buried.

There is not a lot of extant information about the composition of the *Sextet in C major*, except that it was written while he was working for the Budapest Academy of Music in 1935, during a period of months when he was bedridden with thrombosis. The unusual instrumentation seems to be separated into several groups that shift, often pairs and trios playing against one another with melodies and countermelodies. This can often take the form of horn-clarinet, cello-piano, and violin-violin, but sometimes consists of strings-piano-winds, and is sometimes just six soloists, creating a huge wall of sound that seems larger than should be possible. The third movement is reminiscent of works by Mendelssohn, with fast, repeated articulation and an unrelenting rhythm in a minor mode. The fourth movement is a jaunty ragtime, which interplays metric dissonance and cadence elision to constantly move forward with little apparent effort.