

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE OBOE MUSIC OF 'LES SIX'

James Michael Homme, Doctor of Musical Arts,
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Established in the 1920s, 'Les Six' was a group of young composers looking to find their way in the musical world in France during a tumultuous time in Europe. After World War I, the path to success for a composer had changed dramatically, forcing composers to develop new methods and opportunities to have their works performed. Georges Auric (1899–1983), Louis Durey (1899–1979), Arthur Honegger (1892–1955), Darius Milhaud (1892–1974), Francis Poulenc (1899–1963), and Germaine Tailleferre (1892–1983), coined 'Les Six' by Henri Collet, and led by Jean Cocteau found a viable model through which their works would be performed. Though they only worked together for a short time, with vastly different styles, they endeavored to forge a new distinctively French sound during a time of rising musical nationalism. Post-war Paris was a place of international collaborations, with Stravinsky making waves, and the Ballet Russes becoming a fixture. Though collaborations were happening on an international scale, musically, a new ideal of a distinct French sound was occurring. This international collaboration should not be

understated, as members of ‘Les Six’ would also take part in these partnerships. After World War I, the hopes of much of Europe were to create an international stage of artists, and though successful during the 1920s, nationalism was once again rising, separating cultures and eventually leading to World War II.

This dissertation focuses on some of the music written for the oboe by these six composers. Each chapter highlights one of the members of ‘Les Six’ and discusses a few of the works from the composer’s oeuvre. These noted works include compositions written by the composers when they were formally ‘Les Six’ and some written later in their careers. While exploring the period that the composer wrote these works, this dissertation will also examine what makes each composition stylistically unique. Through solo and chamber works, both large and small, this dissertation project presents some well-known works of the oboe repertoire as well as some infrequently performed hidden gems.

This dissertation may be found on ProQuest and all of the recordings associated may be found through the Digital Repository at the University of Maryland.

Recital 1

Performed October 25, 2017 at 5PM in Guildenhorn Recital Hall

Sonatine, op. 335

Darius Milhaud (1892–1974)

- I. Avec charme et vivacité
- II. Souple et clair
- III. Avec entrain et gaîté

Josiah Stocker, piano

Rondo

Germaine Tailleferre (1892–1983)

Josiah Stocker, piano

Impromptu, GA.164

Georges Auric (1899–1983)

Josiah Stocker, piano

Menuet

Germaine Tailleferre (1892–1983)

Josiah Stocker, piano

Trois Pièces Brèves for Oboe solo op.115

Louis Durey (1888–1979)

Sonata for Oboe and Piano, FP.185

Francis Poulenc (1899–1963)

I. Elégie

II. Scherzo

III. Déploration

Josiah Stocker, piano

-Intermission-

Trois Countrepoints, H.43

Arthur Honegger (1892–1955)

I. Prélude

II. Choral

III. Canon sur basse obstinée

Grace Wang, piccolo; Tiffany Lu, violin; Samantha Flores, cello

Rêves de Jacob, op.294

Darius Milhaud (1892–1974)

I. Jacob's Pillow

II. Jacob's Ladder

III. Prophecy

IV. Second dream: fight with a dark angel and benediction

V. Hymn to Israel

Tiffany Lu, violin; Timothy MacDuff Jr., viola; Samantha Flores, cello;

Morgan Daly, double bass

Recital 2

Performed April 24, 2018 at 8PM in Ulrich Recital Hall

Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra, op. 365

Darius Milhaud (1892–1974)

- I. Animé
- II. Avec Sérénité
- III. Animé

Hui Chuan Chen, piano

Trio for Oboe, Clarinet, and Bassoon, GA.114

Georges Auric (1899–1983)

- I. Décidé
- II. Romance
- III. Final

Melissa Morales, clarinet; Jonathan Zepp, bassoon

-Intermission-

Pastorale, op 147

Darius Milhaud (1892–1974)

Melissa Morales, clarinet; Jonathan Zepp, bassoon

Sonate for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, and Piano, op. 47

Darius Milhaud (1892–1974)

- I. Tranquille
- II. Joyeux
- III. Emporté
- IV. Douloureux

Natasha Costello, flute; Melissa Morales, clarinet; Hui Chuan Chen, piano

Recital 3

Performed October 11, 2018 at 8PM in Guildenhorn Recital Hall

Stanford Serenade, op.430

Darius Milhaud (1892–1974)

- I. Galement
- II. Lent et paisible
- III. Vivement

Hui-Chuan Chen, piano

Trois Chansons Basques, op.23

Louis Durey (1888–1979)

- I. Prière
- II. Polka
- III. Attelage

Juliana Franco, soprano; Sarah Balzer, English horn; Dane Clark, clarinet

Qun Ren, bassoon

Sarabande

Germaine Tailleferre (1892–1983)

Dane Clark, clarinet

Quatre Poèmes de Max Jacob, FP.22

Francis Poulenc (1899–1963)

- I. Est-il un coin...
- II. C'est pour aller au bal
- III. Poète at Ténor
- IV. Dans le Buisson de Mimosa

Juliana Franco, soprano; Grace Wang, flute; Dane Clark, clarinet;

Qun Ren, bassoon; Luke Spence, trumpet

-Intermission-

Divertissement, op.107

Louis Durey (1888–1979)

- I. Animé
- II. Lento
- III. Très animé

Dane Clark, clarinet; Qun Ren, bassoon

Concerto da Camera, H.196

Arthur Honegger (1892–1955)

- I. Allegretto amabile
- II. Andante
- III. Vivace

Grace Wang, flute; Hui-Chuan Chen, piano

THE OBOE MUSIC OF 'LES SIX'

by

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Foreword

Heralded by writer George Collet in the publication *Comoedia* in January of 1920 as ‘Les Six,’ Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, and Germaine Tailleferre set out to establish themselves as important composers in post-World War I France. The war ravaged most of Europe, especially France, making the return to any sense of pre-war normalcy almost impossible. During the war, the Prix de Rome was no longer an option for composers to gain recognition; many young composers were looking for new ways to become relevant and have their works performed.

Jean Cocteau, a playwright and poet seized the opportunity, and began to schedule concerts featuring the music of this new group of young French composers. During this time, the composers collaborated on larger projects such as *L’Album des Six*, a piano work where each member wrote a movement, and without Louis Durey, the ballet *Les Mariés de la tour Eiffel*. Though grouped together they each have distinct styles of composition, and openly acknowledged that they were together more for friendship than for any overarching musical quality. “Let me remind you, however, that our group was primarily that of six friends and, contrary to what Collet wanted to discern in our music, we were not linked by any common aesthetic.”¹ It should be noted that Erik Satie briefly tried to make a similar group, ‘Les Nouveaux jeunes,’ involving half of what became ‘Les Six’ but was not successful.

¹ Bálint András Varga, *From Boulanger to Stockhausen: Interviews and a Memoir* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2013), 10-11.

Louis Durey was the first member to formally leave the group in 1921. By the late 1920s the group eventually went their separate ways for various reasons but they remained in contact with each other, meeting up for exhibitions of ‘Les Six’s’ music. The later careers of these composers varied as well. Darius Milhaud would flee from the Nazi regime in France and teach at Mills College while continuing to compose. Georges Auric and Germaine Tailleferre would become known for their film scores, a rising niche where composers could gain recognition. Francis Poulenc and Arthur Honegger would stay in Europe and continue to compose concert music, while Louis Durey would become a voice for the communist party in France after WWII, leaving him in musical and political isolation.

To my husband Dane, and my family: thank you for all of the support.

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I would like to acknowledge and thank Professor Mark Hill who helped me through this entire process. Without his guidance and support, this project would not have been possible.

I would also like to acknowledge the faculty of the University of Maryland School of Music who has provided me with opportunities and knowledge critical to my growth as a musician and pedagogue.

Catalog Note

For this dissertation, I will be using the notations listed below to indicate where each work fits in each composer's canon.

Darius Milhaud's and Louis Durey's works are cataloged using the standard opus numbers.

Francis Poulenc's works are cataloged using FP.

Georges Auric's works are cataloged using GA.

Arthur Honegger's works are cataloged using H.

Germaine Tailleferre currently does not have a complete catalog of her works. There are varying ways in which people have cataloged her works, but due to the fact that none of them are considered standard, I will not use any cataloging system for her works.

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Chapter 1: Georges Auric

Trio for Oboe, Clarinet, and Bassoon, GA.114

Georges Auric wrote this comical, lighthearted piece in 1938 for one of the premiere reed trios of the early 20th century, Trio d'Anches de Paris, arguably the most famous reed trio of the time. The performance by Trio d'Anches de Paris helped this work to gain quick recognition within the canon of reed trios.² Now a standard in the reed trio repertoire, this work offers an interesting take on the nuances of the instrumentation of oboe, clarinet, and bassoon. Auric uses the voices independently, with several distinct melodic ideas serving as the basis of the work instead of using a variety of harmonies against a single melody, which was a more standard practice at the time. This three movement work, with its innovative compositional technique is a prime example of the 'Les Six' style. That style is best summed up by Georges Auric himself, who was quoted saying that the members of 'Les Six,' "...wanted to compose music that was new and genuinely French. [We] were guided by the goal to speak in a characteristically French idiom, because we hoped that our music would talk to music lovers the world over."³

The first movement of this trio, *Décidé*, is fast-paced and explores the contrast between major and minor tonalities. This movement sounds dainty and comical, as demonstrated by the soft, staccato middle section of this work. The second

² Carl B. Schmidt, *The Music of Georges Auric: A Documented Catalogue in Four Volumes* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2013), 498-500.

³ Bálint András Varga, *From Boulanger to Stockhausen: Interviews and a Memoir* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2013), 10.

movement, *Romance*, is slower than the two outer movements. Auric imbues a sense of yearning and love by writing simple yet elegant melodies that pass between the intertwining voices. The quirky finale of this work, *Final*, is full of rapid tempo changes and character shifts, and uses fragments of material from the two previous movements. The opening theme is bright, in a fast 9/8 with rapid scales and spritely articulations. This gives way to the rustic second section, as heralded by the oboe. After a series of slower tempos, the opening theme returns briefly only to evolve into a statelier minuet-like theme. A final tempo variation comes in the form of an eccentric 7/4 section that leads into the coda of this work.

Impromptu, GA.164

Impromptu is an extremely short work by Georges Auric composed in August 1953 and is a superb work for a beginner oboist to learn. This work, though not extremely technically challenging for the oboe, is fairly difficult for the pianist, and the effect created is one of French playfulness and charm. Auric connects the work motivically through melodic fragments, yet still ventures into unique harmonic landscapes making this a worthwhile composition. As its name implies, this work can at times sound almost improvised.

Chapter 2: Louis Durey

Trois Chansons Basques, op.23

An early work from Louis Durey composed in 1919, *Trois Chansons Basques*, op. 23 is a charming piece in three short movements. Based on the poetry of Jean Cocteau these songs are scored for voice, oboe, English horn, clarinet, and bassoon. Durey eventually re-orchestrated the work for string quartet and wrote his own reduction for voice and piano. This work was conceived by Durey while on a trip with Jean Cocteau to Spain, and was based on folk-tunes that Durey heard while there. *Trois Chansons Basques* is dedicated to his brother Pierre Durey, who was also traveling with them. The first movement is chorale-like with a clear, simple melody in the voice and oboe, which is supported by simple traditional harmonies. The second movement is short and spritely, very folk-like in nature. The movement opens with a short introduction by the oboe, English horn, and bassoon, the only instruments Auric decided to use for this movement. The last movement is the most avant-garde sounding with the oboe and English horn weaving their lines together over an ostinato of major 7ths and minor 9ths in the clarinet and bassoon parts. A haunting vocal melody is heard after a short opening, then vanishes leaving the dense harmonic texture to fade.

Divertissement, op.107

Divertissement, op.107 was written in 1966-1967 while Louis Durey was in Saint-Tropez, a place he lived during much of his later life. One of Durey's last compositions, this work was never performed publicly during his lifetime. The trio

was given its formal premiere in 1986 by oboist Pierre Pierlot, clarinetist André Boutard, and bassoonist André Rabaut. This work is in three movements beginning with *Animé*. It opens with a lengthy clarinet solo which showcases the main melodic theme for the movement. The bassoon and oboe enter and Durey begins to explore the various timbral textures that can be achieved by a reed trio. The second movement is much darker in temperament, almost dirge-like, with a low ostinato played through much of the movement by the bassoon, while the oboe and clarinet play the melodies. The finale of this work begins with the bassoon playing a trilled melody which is then played by the clarinet and oboe respectively. Durey creates unique timbres in the ensemble through his use of trills against metered tremolos. In the finale movement, Durey employs contrasting melodic characters from militaristic opening theme to the sung legato second theme, heard in the oboe atop an undulating clarinet and bassoon line. The tonal structure of this work is unusual and quite different from what is expected in a three movement piece: the first movement is in F major, the second in A minor, and the third in E minor. The lack of tonal relation between the three movements helps to create musical separateness within a larger piece while abandoning the idea of an overarching unified character.

Trois Pièces Brèves, op.115

Trois Pièces Brèves op.115, written in 1975 by Louis Durey, is the only work for unaccompanied oboe by any of the composers of 'Les Six.' Pastoral in nature, each of the three movements suggests a sense of freedom and expansiveness that is achieved through Durey's frequent use of fermatas and pauses. The bucolic nature of this work is reminiscent of the famous solo oboe work *Evocations* (1969) by French

composer Henri Tomasi (1901-1971), especially with the use of short repeated low notes to obtain a percussive effect. Compared to the other works by the composers of 'Les Six,' this work is not as harmonically adventurous or as melodically forward thinking, yet is still an excellent example of the trajectory that 20th century French music would take.

Chapter 3: Arthur Honegger

Trois Countrepoints, H.43

This charming work by Arthur Honegger in three short movements was composed in November 1922 and first performed in February 1925 in Paris.⁴ Employing an unusual ensemble of piccolo, oboe / English horn, violin, and cello, this work is actually a study in contrapuntal exercises, with each movement having a dedication to one of his friends.

The first movement, *Prélude* is dedicated to composer Maurice Jaubert, and is a duet for oboe and cello. *Prélude* is a quirky study in invertible counterpoint, meaning the voices are switched almost halfway through the movement while the harmonic structure remains stable. Honegger is extremely specific in notating articulations, asking both the oboist and cellist to play the music using a variety of articulations ranging from staccato to tenuto within just a few notes.

The second movement of this work, dedicated to a school friend Jacques Brillouin, is titled *Choral* and is for violin, English horn, and cello. This work is a chorale prelude in the style of Johann Sebastian Bach. Unlike many compositions by his colleagues in ‘Les Six,’ this movement has an obvious German influence, something quite strange for a group trying to create a new and distinctive French aesthetic. This German influence is likely due to Honegger’s unwillingness to deny

⁴ Harry Halbreich, *Arthur Honegger*, ed. Reinhard G. Pauly, trans. Roger Nichols (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1999), 274.

his Swiss heritage in post WWI Europe, despite rising nationalism.⁵ In this movement the cello plays a constant neo-baroque continuo-like bass line while the violin plays a melody in four bar phrases, with the English horn playing a chorale melody in slower rhythmic values, similar to many works by J.S. Bach.

The third movement, *Canon sur basse obstinée* or “canon with a bass ostinato,” is dedicated to Honegger’s friend Marcel Delannoy, a composer and music critic. This movement, for piccolo, English horn, violin, and cello, is a canon for the upper three voices, while the cello plays a jaunty ostinato. The first section is spritely but morphs into a more lyrical segment, then returns to the opening musical statement with the cello having the final say.

Concerto da Camera, H.196

One of the staples of Arthur Honegger’s work, the *Concerto da Camera*, written in 1948, is among the most charming and recognized of all of his compositions. Dedicated to and commissioned by a well known benefactor of the arts, Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, this work was the first composition Honegger completed after he suffered a heart attack in 1947.⁶ Since its debut performance, this concerto for flute, English horn, and strings continues to be one of Honegger’s most performed works. Renowned conductor Paul Sacher led the premiere of this concerto on May 6,

⁵ Jane F. Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France, 1914-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 184-188.

⁶ Harry Halbreich, *Arthur Honegger*, ed. Reinhard G. Pauly, trans. Roger Nichols (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1999), 196.

1949, featuring flutist André Jaunet, English horn player Marcel Saillet, and the Collegium Musicum of Zurich.⁷

The first movement of this concerto begins with a few measures of homophonic chords in the strings. The English horn then introduces one of the main themes for the movement, a smooth and lyrical musical idea, and is answered by the flute who presents a second theme, which is more rustic and buoyant. Throughout the movement, the flute and English horn converse with each other, calling back and forth, echoing one another. The second movement features lyrical English horn melodies accompanied by descant-like florid flute lines, while the strings create a serene atmosphere with slow moving homophonic chords. Honegger creates a quasi-impromptu texture through the elaborate and ornate flute part. The music in the last movement is quick, light, and exciting with rapid chromatic scales in all of the parts. There are instances where Honegger begins an ostinato in the strings and English horn, while the flute plays a soaring melody above the other instruments to striking effect. The work ends in charming fashion with short pointed melodic fragments, dissipating suddenly to nothing.

⁷ Ibid, 340-344.

Chapter 4: Darius Milhaud

Sonate for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, and Piano, op.47

Sonate for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, and Piano, op.47 is an early work in the canon of Darius Milhaud, written while he was traveling in Brazil with friend and collaborator Paul Claudel. During this international excursion, Milhaud heard Brazilian dance songs and folk tunes which he incorporated into his compositional style. *Sonate* is an example of how unique dance-like rhythms derived from Brazilian music often find their way into many of Milhaud's compositions. Though it is not as clearly Brazilian as Milhaud's ballets, *Le Boeuf sur le toit* or *L'homme et son désir*, *Sonate* demonstrates his attempt to fuse Brazilian musical style with traditional European classical composition techniques, acquired at the Paris Conservatory. Milhaud also uses influences from jazz in this work as well. Though *Sonate* was written before his tour to New York in 1922, where he heard jazz music performed, his use of certain intervals such as the blues third ($b3$ moving to $\sharp 3$) demonstrates his early use of the jazz idiom.⁸ This early work shows limited use of Brazilian and jazz elements in his writing. Milhaud's later compositions make greater use of these borrowed stylistic elements.

Tranquille, the first movement of *Sonate*, begins with an eighth-note piano ostinato which returns throughout much of the movement. The main, placid, melodic motive of the movement is heard first in the oboe and then transferred in turn to each

⁸Deborah Mawer, *Darius Milhaud: Modality and Structure in Music of the 1920s* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 128-129.

instrument in varying tonal centers. By doing so Milhaud fully embraces the textural changes available to this unique ensemble. In this and many other works, Milhaud experiments with the idea of polytonality; using multiple key centers concurrently. While other composers used this technique, Milhaud was one of the first to compose long polytonal sections within compositions.

The second movement, *Joyeux*, is jaunty, yet the softer dynamics give it an eerie quality. The energy that is heard through most of this movement eventually dies down, and a *plus calme* coda finishes out the work. It is during this coda that Milhaud's creative use of unusual ensemble texture can be heard. While the flute and clarinet are playing rhythmically fast patterns in their mid-lower registers, Milhaud writes the oboe and piano in octaves in their highest tessitura to brilliant effect.

The third movement, *Emporté* (carried away or fiery), is the most musically disparate movement of this work. The loud and ruckus temperament throughout can be jarring to some listeners. Milhaud propels the movement with varying motives of scale patterns or intervallic eighth note lines and percussive articulation in each instrument, as well as polytonal techniques that some audiences find difficult to listen to. Paul Collaer, a close friend and biographer of Darius Milhaud wrote of this work,

The tension in this composition is allied to that of Milhaud's dramatic works. The four movements present four moods: quiet, joyous, passionate, and sad. The first two are pastorals; the third superimposes a torrent of woodwind sounds on heavily compressed harmonic blocks in the piano. The fourth movement is like a funeral march...The first and fourth movements of this sonata are extremely beautiful, but the third is too preoccupied with rigid formulas to be altogether successful.⁹

⁹ Collaer, Paul, and Jane Hohfeld Galante. *Darius Milhaud* (San Francisco: San Francisco Press, 1988), 212.

Milhaud closes the work in a fashion similar to the beginning of the piece. The last movement, *Douloureux* (painful), is slow and mournful. The oboe and clarinet share much of the melodic material, while the flute plays a mostly non-melodic secondary role. As if to evoke a sense of loss, a huge crying-out from the ensemble is heard during the climax of the movement. The work ends with the piano line descending into the low register, then quietly vanishing, ultimately creating a sense of resignation.

Darius Milhaud had profound ideas during this time about the direction of French music, and was innovative in his use of instrumentation and harmony in order to achieve them. *Sonate* is one of a few works that uses a high woodwind trio, consisting of flute, oboe, and clarinet, as well as a piano, (Another major work for this instrumentation is the *Caprice sur des airs danois et russes* by Camille Saint-Saëns, written in 1887). An issue when composing for this group of instruments is finding a balance between the voices, three of which are naturally soprano and alto voices. The sounds blend beautifully, but the limited range leaves the bass line mainly to the piano.

Pastorale, op.147

Pastorale, op.147 one of many neoclassical works composed by Milhaud. Neoclassicism, a looking back to earlier compositional periods with modernized harmonies and melodies, was not new when this work was written. The idea of neoclassicism was seen by Milhaud as a continuation of the French line of composers,

from Rameau through Berlioz, Bizet, Chabrier to Satie.¹⁰ Other examples of Milhaud's neoclassical/neo-baroque influence can be heard in his wind quintet *La Cheminée du roi René*, op. 205, and his reed trio *Suite d'après Corrette*, op. 161; both pieces rely more on classical and baroque forms while using modern tonalities.

Pastorale is a short but charismatic work which, begins with a simple, flowing melody in the oboe accompanied by a bouncing bassoon line and flowing sixteenths in the clarinet. Milhaud employs traditional four measure phrases throughout much of the work, with phrase extensions and elisions providing occasional asymmetrical structure. Besides having an obvious ternary form, or ABA, the most noticeable neoclassical element is the three voice fugue in the middle section of this work. After all three voices have entered, Milhaud overlays the beginning theme of the piece with the fugue theme and develops the material through several harmonic landscapes until a recapitulation of the beginning theme begins. Like many reed trios from this time, this was written for and premiered by the Trio d'Anches de Paris.¹¹ Their playing inspired a large number of compositions from 'Les Six' and many other French composers of the 1920s and 1930s.

Rêves de Jacob, op.294

Rêves de Jacob, op.294, or, "Jacob's Dreams," was composed by Darius Milhaud in April 1949 during his tenure at Mills College in California. The work was not written for the college, but instead was commissioned by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation for the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival as a new ballet to be

¹⁰ Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 124.

¹¹ Madeleine Milhaud, comp., *Catalogues Des Oeuvres De Darius Milhaud* (Genève: Slatkine, 1982), 400-401.

premiered that summer while Milhaud was teaching at the nearby Tanglewood Festival.¹² Inspiration for the work came from the name of the festival as well as Milhaud's deeply rooted Jewish heritage. Jacob's ladder is a commonly told story from the Old Testament which Milhaud uses as a central element of this five movement "suite choréographique," which was originally danced by Martha Graham.¹³ Scored for oboe (often representing God), violin, viola, cello, and double bass, *Rêves de Jacob* is today more often performed as a concert work without dancers.

The first movement, *L'Oreiller de Jacob*, is pastoral in nature and gentle, as if showing Jacob lying down upon a rock and falling asleep as in the Old Testament story. Through different orchestrations, Milhaud changes the musical texture of the ensemble, providing a showcase of the variety of sounds these instruments can produce. This movement acts as a prelude for the longer and more emotionally charged second movement.

. The second movement is based upon the story of Jacob climbing up a ladder into heaven and back down to Earth. The story is mirrored not only in the overall form of the piece but also in the melodic fragments. The use of tremolos in the high strings creates a sense of wonder which expands into the full ensemble opening up in a complex and impassioned manner. The middle section is in an unusual 5/4 and the meter is often not apparent, as if Milhaud is showing that Jacob made it to the top of the ladder and is in heaven. The climax of the movement is an extremely soft

¹² Ibid, 412-413.

¹³ Colin Mason, "The Chamber Music of Milhaud," *The Musical Quarterly* XLIII, no.3 (July 1957): 337.

moment, in which Milhaud uses a single note in the oboe as a representation of blissful delight. This moment is an axis after which Milhaud uses the melodic ideas in retrograde to show Jacob climbing back down the ladder.

The third movement, *Prophétie*, is simple in its melodic ideas and really foreshadows the choral nature of the fifth movement. The melodies are expansive yet simple, almost folk-like in nature. During the third movement, God is telling Jacob that the land he is standing on will one day belong to his children.

This leads into the fiery and extremely difficult to play fourth movement, *Deuxième rêve (Lutte avec l'Ange et Bénédiction)*. There is a brief introduction, from which Milhaud moves into a section that features much melodic imitation, beginning with the oboe then moving throughout the string voices. This intense movement musically conveys a battle between angels as Jacob descends the ladder.

The final movement, *Israël (Hymne)*, combines choral-like homophonic textures with almost chant-like, very modal melody in octaves from the oboe and violin. The work ends, not with a typical tonal chord, but instead with a slightly dissonant chord in triumphant form, representing the peace Jacob feels.

Sonatine, op.337

Sonatine, op.337 for oboe and piano by Darius Milhaud features many hallmarks of his compositional style: neoclassic forms, melodic fragments, and semi-regular phrase lengths. Written in August of 1954 in just thirteen days, this work was dedicated to, and premiered by renowned oboist and pedagogue Lois Wann in

November of the same year.¹⁴ The two met when they were both on the faculty of the Aspen Summer Music Festival, where this work was originally conceived. This composition in three movements is a challenge to play and listen to, as most of it has a dense texture with interweaving musical lines, with Milhaud using the two instruments independently from each other.

The first movement, *Avec charme et vivacité*, is the slowest of the three movements, yet is still texturally complex because of its many melodic fragments. Milhaud interweaves the fragments creating layers of melodic ideas, which cause quick shifts in character, often multiple times in one measure. The second movement, *Souple et clair*, is in a simple 6/8 and is the most easily accessible movement. Though Milhaud writes the entire movement in 6/8, there are two sections in the movement during which the oboe plays in 5/16, while the piano stays in 6/8. This rhythmic effect produces a peculiar off kilter feel from which Milhaud effortlessly leads the listener back into a swinging ease. The third movement, *Avec entrain et gaîté*, begins with a fanfare like motif then switches into a flowing and cheerful melody, which is fragmented throughout both voices. Milhaud frequently throughout this work, especially in this movement, uses the piano as multiple voices instead of one unified sounding instrument, by indicating extreme varying dynamics in each of the hands and moving melodic fragments through the both hands independently.

¹⁴ Madeleine Milhaud, comp., *Catalogues Des Oeuvres De Darius Milhaud* (Genève: Slatkine, 1982), 394-395.

Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra, op.365

Darius Milhaud composed in a variety of genres, including ballets, symphonies, sonatas, chamber music, as well as concerti for many instruments. It was during the later part of his career that he wrote *Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra, op.365*. This later work features many elements that hearken back to Milhaud's earlier compositions. Of these, the use of jazz and Brazilian harmonies and rhythms is the most prevalent, yet like his other works, still maintains a very clear French style. This concerto was premiered by renowned French oboist Pierre Pierlot in 1958 in Paris.¹⁵ In an interview with Claude Rostand, Milhaud said, "[...]this problem that consists, or ought to consist, of giving an instrument and instrumentalist the chance to show off, to exploit their technical resources...a concerto should be difficult...while giving the music its due. I mean one must take care to produce a taut musical fabric while leaving the virtuoso free to show his skill, like a thoroughbred in a horse race [...]."¹⁶

The first movement of this concerto, marked *Animé*, is playful and cunning with the oboe opening the work with a simple melody. The movement continues in Milhaud's signature light-hearted fashion present in many of his later compositions. Instead of developing the theme that is used during the opening section, Milhaud instead slightly varies the melodic ideas of the first section while transposing the music a half step down. The movement ends suddenly but gracefully, an ending as playful as it began.

¹⁵ Ibid, 447.

¹⁶ Darius Milhaud and Claude Rostand, *Darius Milhaud: Interviews with Claude Rostand*, trans. Jane Hohfeld Galante (Oakland, CA: Center for the Book, Mills College, 2002), 61-62.

Milhaud marks the second movement *Avec sérénité*. The music of this movement has an expansive singing quality about it, with Milhaud seeming to forget the necessity of the soloist's need to breathe. This quality of lengthy melodic phrases is seen frequently throughout much of Milhaud's output. Through the long phrases, Milhaud is able to create a sense of meditation and tranquility, almost as if there is no end goal to each phrase. The lines of the oboe and the orchestra intertwine creating a dialogue amongst the ensemble.

The finale of this work, like the first movement, is marked *Animé*, though Milhaud specifies a slightly faster tempo here than in the earlier movement. There is a sense of joy and youthful naiveté about much of this movement. Milhaud exhausts the limits of the possible range of the oboe, frequently writing large intervallic leaps. These quick changes in tessitura create challenges for the performer though it does not hinder the musicality of the melodic lines. While the melodies of Milhaud's *Concerto for Oboe* may, on paper, seem jagged, a performance of this work shows this is not so. Milhaud has masterfully created a great virtuosic showpiece for the oboe, and a welcome addition to the oboe repertoire.

Stanford Serenade, op.430

Stanford Serenade, op.430 was composed by Darius Milhaud in 1969. Unlike his *Oboe Concerto*, written 12 years prior which featured a large orchestra, this work is much smaller in scale in both instrumentation and length. Oboist and surgeon Dr. Donald Leake commissioned and premiered this work with the Stanford Symphony

Orchestra under the baton of Sandor Salgo.¹⁷ The ensemble of two violins, viola, cello, bass, flute, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, harp, and percussion interact with the solo oboe in a chamber-like setting rather than a typical concerto with major ritornello sections. The oboe's musical lines are frequently not as important as the 'melodies' in the ensemble. As in his *Oboe Concerto*, Milhaud focuses less on developing melodic ideas and more on short fragments and motifs. The oboe frequently introduces the fragments, which are then passed to the ensemble. As the piece evolves the fragments are often reordered measure by measure in a pseudo-serialistic fashion.

The first movement of this work, marked *Gaiement*, is moderate in tempo and bucolic in nature. Milhaud presents the first half of this movement in clearly discernable theme groups that can be identified as "A, B, and C." These theme groups, made up of melodic fragments, display a technique Milhaud employed frequently in many of his later compositions. About half way through the movement, the themes are reversed, and presented in the order "C, B, A" with some slight variation in pitch levels and length of sections.

The second movement, marked *Lent et paisible*, is somber and yearning with swells of passion. Milhaud continues to use melodic fragments in a similar fashion as the previous movement. This movement, however, is almost a musical stream of consciousness as melodic fragments evolve into other fragments, with only the opening theme in the oboe making a return. The movement ends with a soft harmonic

¹⁷ Madeleine Milhaud, comp., *Catalogues Des Oeuvres De Darius Milhaud* (Genève: Slatkine, 1982), 448-449.

in the oboe, unique to this piece, as Milhaud did not employ the use of harmonics for oboe in any other of his solo oboe works.

The third and final movement of this work, *Vivement*, is a fun play on time signatures and rhythmic feel. Though it is composed in 9/8, the sense of meter seems to shift into 12/8 as Milhaud displaces the downbeat. Just as the piece appears to end, Milhaud reprises the beginning of the movement again, this time in an actual 12/8 meter. After a short oboe cadenza, Milhaud again manipulates the sense of meter by making groupings of five beats only to resolve the rhythmic feeling of instability in the triumphant last measure.

Chapter 5: Francis Poulenc

Quatre Poèmes de Max Jacob, FP.22

Quatre Poèmes de Max Jacob provides great insight into Francis Poulenc's early compositional career. Written in 1921, Poulenc uses dissonant harmonies and thick textures throughout, characteristics that are seen less frequently in much of his later works, and are an indication of his experimentation during this early compositional period.¹⁸ In each movement, Poulenc set to music a poem by the prominent pseudo-symbolist painter and poet Max Jacob. The instrumentation of this work makes it unique by employing a vocal soloist, along with flute, oboe, clarinet, trumpet and bassoon. Interestingly, Darius Milhaud would later be the person who ensured this work's survival after its premiere. Poulenc declared that he had destroyed the manuscript of this set of poems, but many years later, the manuscript was discovered in Darius Milhaud's personal archives.¹⁹

The first movement begins with a slow bassoon solo and features many dissonant harmonies between the voice and the instruments. Poulenc uses the voice throughout this work, almost as if it is another instrument, begging the question of whether or not the actual words are as important as the harmonies and emotions conveyed. The idea of the literal interpretation of the text versus the implied emotion of the music is a common concept among symbolist artists and is a fundamental

¹⁸ Carl B. Schmidt, "Distilling Essences: Poulenc and Matisse," in *Francis Poulenc: Music, Art, and Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1999), 207.

¹⁹ Carl B. Schmidt, preface, in *Quatre Poèmes De Max Jacob* (Paris: Éditions Salabert, 1993), 6-7.

tenant of the entire symbolist movement. The second movement, less dissonant than the first, is quick-paced and features many jarring metrical changes. Movement three is unhurried and dense with homophonic chords in the winds. The finale of this work features quick scales and rapid dynamic shifts, and is stylistically the closest to Poulenc's later oeuvre.

Sonata for Oboe and Piano, FP.185

A sweet and nostalgic work that at times can be extremely foreboding and forlorn, *Sonata for Oboe and Piano* was the last work composed by Francis Poulenc. Completed in 1962 the year before his death, this work is dedicated to the memory of his friend Serge Prokofiev (1891-1953). This work was not premiered until 1963, after Poulenc's death, by oboist Pierre Pierlot and pianist Jacques Février.²⁰ Prokofiev had a profound influence on many composers of the early to mid-20th century which this work by Poulenc really showcases by emulating the melodies of Prokofiev. Abandoning the usual fast-slow-fast progression of the movements, Poulenc instead reverses them to slow-fast-slow. Because this was the last piece Poulenc composed, scholars have suggested that the heavy and overall melancholic nature might represent Poulenc's effort to deal with his own mortality. This work is considered not only one of the great compositions in Poulenc's canon, but is also one of the best known and most often played works in the oboe repertoire.

The first movement *Elégie*, marked 'paisiblement,' or peacefully, opens with a lone oboe line which moves into a glassy and introverted theme that pours over into sections of intense emotional expansion. Poulenc demands a huge range of expressive

²⁰ Benjamin Ivry, *Francis Poulenc* (London: Phaidon Press, 1996), 218.

playing, not only in articulations and dynamics, but also in the colors produced by both performers. The middle of this movement feels quite heavy, as if Poulenc is mourning his lost friend in an extroverted fashion.

The second movement, *Scherzo*, has an extreme amount of Prokofiev's influence written into it. Written in three distinct sections, this movement opens with a quick paced and pointed piano line. Poulenc weaves the voices of the two instruments through each other which create a spritely, almost impish texture. The second section is much slower, as is common with this form, and uses a theme from the last movement of Prokofiev's "Flute Sonata" as the basis for the melody. A return of the opening themes in a more compact form with more extremes in dynamics ends the movement just as quickly as it began.

Déploration is what Poulenc titles the final movement of the work. The music is slow and heavy, depressed yet passionate, utilizing not only extreme dynamic limits, but also a large range in both instruments. This movement recalls the first with a theme taken directly from the opening movement, as if Poulenc is reminiscing about his life, and the life of Prokofiev. This nostalgic section fades back into the somber, denser music, ending softly and with dissonance.

Chapter 6: Germaine Tailleferre

Rondo and Menuet

Rondo and *Menuet* are two short works for oboe and piano by Germaine Tailleferre. Both written near the end her career and feature her typical compositional style of simple forms with interesting and unexpected harmonies.²¹ These pieces are among a number of short works written during this time which also include *Arabesque* for clarinet and piano (1973) and *Forlane* for flute and piano (1972).

Rondo was written in 1973 and dedicated to Frédéric Robert, a friend and editor of her written works. As stated in the title, the form of this work is a five part rondo during which the oboist plays almost continuously. Tailleferre, in this piece, utilizes nearly the full range of the oboe, writing a few F#6's into the score. The piano is mainly accompanimental, but helps to create the flowing feel of the work.

Menuet is another brief work which was written in 1975. This work, like a traditional minuet, is in triple meter, yet she marks the tempo "Allegro" which is characteristically much faster than the dance. As in much of her output, Tailleferre uses traditional forms but infuses them with her unique harmonic style. She frequently moves between unrelated key areas yet creates a sense of cohesion through her melodies. A successful piece, this work was later transcribed for both clarinet and alto saxophone.

²¹ Judith Lang Zaimont, *The Musical Woman: An International Perspective: Vol. II 1984-1985* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987), 206-207.

Sarabande for Oboe and Clarinet

Like many of the compositions written by Germaine Tailleferre for the oboe, *Sarabande* is a short work in ternary form. This work is one of the last pieces by Tailleferre, composed in 1979, four years before her death in 1983. It is one of the few works written for oboe and clarinet duet; others include Marion Bauer's *Duo*, Stefan Wolpe's *Suite im Hexachord*, and Arthur Berger's *Duo*. The clarinet carries the melody throughout most of the somewhat tonal work with the oboe playing a floating countermelody. Most of *Sarabande* is quiet and with subtle textural changes until the climax, during which both parts play different four note fragments through a crescendo, increasing tension for arguably the only time in the work. The piece ends with a return of the opening theme, and then dies away.

Appendix

List of Repertoire

(* indicates works intended to be performed as part of this dissertation)

Georges Auric:

Cinq Chansons de Lise Hirtz, GA. 64, for Voice, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Viola, and Cello.

Unpublished. Manuscript held at the Archives George Auric.

Impromptu, GA.164 , for Oboe and Piano*

Published by Gerard Billaudot.

Trio, GA.114, for Oboe, Clarinet and Bassoon*

Published by Jeanné Music Publications.

Louis Durey:

Divertissement, op.107, for Oboe, Clarinet, and Bassoon*

Published by Gerard Billaudot.

Les Soirées de Valfère, op. 96, for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, and French Horn

Published by Gerard Billaudot.

Trois Chansons Basques, op.23, for Voice, Oboe, English horn Clarinet, and Bassoon *

Published by Editions Max Eschig.

Trois Pièces Brèves, op.115, for Oboe solo*

Published by Gerard Billaudot.

Arthur Honegger:

Concerto da Camera, H.196, for Flute, English horn, and String Orchestra*

Published by Editions Salabert.

Incidental Music for Antigone, H.45, for Oboe/English horn, and Harp

No known publisher. Manuscript owned by British Library.

Petite Suite, H.89, for two treble instruments and Piano

Published by Le Chant du Monde.

Rhapsodie, H.13, originally for 2 Flutes, Clarinet, and Piano: Arranged by
composer for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, and Piano

Published by Editions Salabert.

Trois Contrepoints, H.43, for Piccolo, Oboe/English Horn, Violin, and Cello*

Published by Editions Wilhelm Hansen.

Darius Milhaud:

Concerto, op.365, for Oboe and Orchestra*

Published by Heugel & Co.

Divertissement, op.299b, for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, and French Horn

Published by Heugel & Co.

Jacob's Dream, op.294, for Oboe, Violin, Viola, Cello, and Bass*

Published by Heugel & Co.

La Chiminée du roi René, op.205, for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, and
French Horn

Published by Southern Music Company.

Pastorale, op.147, for Oboe, Clarinet, and Bassoon*

Published by Masters Music Publications.

Quintet, op.443, for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, and French Horn

Published by Editions Max Eschig.

Sonate, op.47, for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, and Piano*

Published by Jeanné Music Publications.

Sonatine, op.337, for Oboe and Piano*

Published by Durand Editions Musicales.

Stanford Serenade, op.430, for Oboe and 11 Instruments*

Published by Editions Max Eschig.

Suite d'après Corrette, op.161, for Oboe, Clarinet, and Bassoon

Published by TrevCo Music Publishing.

Two Sketches, op.227b, for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, and French Horn

Published by Theodore Presser.

Francis Poulenc:

Caprice Espagnol, FP.34, for Oboe and Piano

Unpublished. Manuscript has been destroyed.

Quatre Poèmes de Max Jacob, FP.22, for Voice, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet,
Bassoon, and Trumpet*

Published by Editions Salabert.

Sextet, FP.100, for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, French horn, Bassoon, and Piano

Published by Edition Wilhelm Hansen.

Sonata, FP.185, for Oboe and Piano*

Published by Chester Music.

Trio, FP.43, for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano

Published by Edition Wilhelm Hansen.

Germaine Tailleferre:

Choral et Deux Variations, for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, and French Horn.

Published by Editions de la Fabrique Musique.

Entonnement, for Oboe, Harp, Piano, and Strings

Published by Gerard Billaudot.

Menuet, for Oboe and Piano*

Published by Editions de la Fabrique Musique.

Menuet en Fa, for Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, and Piano

Published by Editions de la Fabrique Musique.

Partita, for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings

Published by Sikorski.

Rondo, for Oboe and Piano*

Published by Editions Henry Lemoine.

Sarabande, for Oboe and Clarinet*

Published by Editions de la Fabrique Musique.

Sérénade en la mineur, for two Oboes, Clarinet, Bassoon, and Piano

Published by Editions de la Fabrique Musique.

Sonate Champêtre, for Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, and Piano

Published by Editions de la Fabrique Musique.

Sonatine, for Oboe and Piano

Unpublished. Manuscript location unknown.

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