

September 25, 2022 - Sonoran Winds

Program notes by J. Michael Allsen

Both halves of this program by the Sonoran Winds—all members of the Arizona Philharmonic—begin with famous movie themes by Henry Mancini, the ultra-cool Pink Panther Theme and the bumptious Baby Elephant Walk. The program is dominated by French music, with colorful woodwind chamber works by Françaix and Auric, and arrangements of two works by Ravel, including his well-known *Le Tombeau de Couperin*. The second half also includes a set of songs from Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. At end, the quintet will send you out dancing, with an infectious arrangement of the Brazilian classic *Tico-Tico no fubá*.

Henry Mancini (1924-1994)

Theme from "The Pink Panther" (arr. James Christensen)

Though Henry Mancini studied briefly at Juilliard, this thoroughly successful composer was largely self-trained. Also a talented arranger, he started his career writing for big bands. He became one of the sought-after arrangers in America, and created arrangements for popular singers, but also for his own series of successful recordings, which made effective use of the new long-playing record format. Mancini had a parallel career as a film and television composer, becoming a staff composer at Universal Studios in 1952. He worked at a phenomenal rate, completing more than a dozen film scores a year through most of the 1950s and 1960s, often in his distinctive jazz-influenced style. Mancini had a particularly close working relationship with director Blake Edwards, and in 1963 he scored Edwards's outrageous comedy *The Pink Panther*, which introduced the character of bumbling

Inspector Closeau, unforgettably played by Peter Sellers. Mancini wrote the film's slinky main theme to accompany the animated opening credits created by Friz Freling. In the credits, the theme is played seductively by tenor saxophonist Plas Johnson, a studio session musician with whom Mancini had worked frequently. Mancini created the theme with Johnson's sound specifically in mind. James Christensen's witty arrangement begins with finger snaps, and gives the melody largely to oboe, before a swinging bridge for the ensemble and a piccolo solo.



Jean Françaix (1912-1997)

Quartet for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet and Bassoon

You would have to work hard to dislike the music of Jean Françaix—his compositions, over 200 in all, are consistently witty, urbane, bright, and optimistic. The composer said it best: his intent was always simply “to give pleasure.” Born in Le Mans, his talent was recognized by Maurice Ravel when Françaix was still a child. He began his studies at the Le Mans Conservatory, which was directed by his father, a teacher of singing. As a teenager, he moved on to the Paris Conservatory, and he was also one of many leading 20th-century composers who trained with the remarkable composition teacher Nadia Boulanger. He was a fine pianist and performed throughout his career as well, playing his own music and interpreting a huge range of other repertoire. His *Quartet for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet and Bassoon* dates from 1933, and was written for the woodwind faculty of the Le Mans Conservatory. The woodwind quintet, including horn, was the well-established, standard woodwind chamber ensemble, and Françaix would later write two fine woodwind quintets (1948 and 1987). Years later, with tongue firmly in cheek, he explained his decision to leave the horn out of this work: “As the horn tutor who was [at the Le Mans Conservatory] at the time was never quite sure what sound would emerge from his instrument—his fame was as a specialist in the art of playing several notes at the same time—I had decided not to ‘rouse the volcano,’ and wrote a quartet without horn which would be less likely to produce disconcerting surprises.”



The bright opening movement (*Allegro*) is full of quirky good humor, with short musical phrases tossed quickly between players. There is a rather mournful contrasting section, but does not last very long either time it appears—nor does it seem intended to be taken too seriously—and the movement ends with a flippant gesture from all players. This is followed by a lyrical, flowing *Andante* full of colorful French harmony. The *Allegro molto* begins with dancelike music that cannot quite decide what sort of dance is going to be, as it constantly shifts between meters. There is a more relaxed and humorous middle section that begins with a clarinet/bassoon duet, before a reprise of the opening texture. The closing movement (*Allegro vivo*) begins a repeated-note figure passed quickly among the quartet. There is a contrasting episode near the end with a lovely oboe solo, but the movement ends with a brief coda (If you blink, you’ll miss it...) that returns to the opening figure.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

***Pièce en forme de habanera* (arr. Clarke Kessler)**

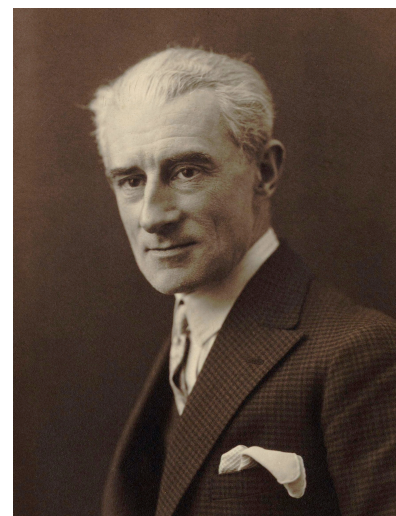
Many French composers in the decades around the turn of the 20th century had an abiding love affair with Spanish music. Bizet, Chabrier, Debussy and many others channeled exotic musical influences from across the Pyrenees in their compositions. In the case of Maurice Ravel, however, he came by his interest in Spanish music quite naturally. Ravel was born to a Swiss father and a Basque mother in Ciboure—a small seaside town in the Basque region near France’s border with Spain. Though his family moved to Paris when he was just three months old, he remained emotionally connected to his mother’s heritage throughout his life, and many of his works incorporate influences from Basque and Spanish music. As his friend Manuel de Falla once wrote: “Ravel’s Spain was felt in an idealized way through his mother.” In 1907, while beginning work on his opera *L’heure espagnole* (*The Spanish Hour, or Spanish Time*), he composed a brief, wordless piece for bass voice and piano titled *Vocalise-étude en forme de habanera* (*Vocalise in the form of a habanera*). The *habanera* is of course most famous in classical music as Carmen’s dramatic entrance-song in Bizet’s 1875 opera. The distinctive *habanera* rhythm comes from a scandalously sensuous Spanish-Cuban couple dance of the late 19th century. Ravel’s challenging *Vocalise* is now much more often heard as an instrumental *Pièce*. Ravel himself created a version for cello and piano a few years later, and it has been rearranged for a host of different ensembles, including the woodwind quintet version heard here. In Clarke Kessler’s arrangement, the *habanera* rhythm emerges gradually and the flowing melody is carried primarily by the oboe.



Maurice Ravel

***Le Tombeau de Couperin* (arr. Mason Jones)**

The lament, homage, or *tombeau* to the memory of a great person recently (or not-so-recently) deceased is one of the oldest of musical genres. There are surviving lamentations on the death of Charlemagne and other medieval kings, and from the fourteenth century onwards, dozens of musical commemorations of composers. These works, often by the dead composer’s closest friends, are usually written in the musical style of the composer and frequently include musical quotations from his works. This tradition was particularly prominent among French composers of the



seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, who produced dozens of heartfelt *tombeaux* for deceased colleagues and teachers. François Couperin (1668-1730), the greatest French harpsichordist of his day, produced two such works, for Lully and Corelli.

Ravel initially composed his *Le Tombeau de Couperin (The Tomb of Couperin)* as a piece for piano solo. It commemorates François Couperin, but in a more general sense, it is a celebration of the spirit of French Baroque music, and a clear expression of Ravel's "Neoclassical" interest in Classical and Baroque forms and musical idioms. The work, originally titled *Suite française*, was begun just before Ravel left for volunteer service on the front lines of World War I in 1915, and left unfinished until 1917. By this time, several of Ravel's closest friends had been killed in the war, and the *Suite* took on an added personal dimension: each movement was dedicated to one his lost *confrères*. In 1919, Ravel orchestrated the *Suite française*, discarding two of its more pianistic movements (a *Toccata* and a *Fugue*), and retitling it *Le Tombeau de Couperin*. The four orchestral movements are built along the lines of a French dance suite of Couperin's era. The arrangement heard here was written by hornist Mason Jones, who spent over 30 years as principal horn of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and who was also an acclaimed soloist.

Prelude movements by Couperin and his contemporaries were frequently improvisatory in style, often consisting of ornamental figuration around the barest hints of melody. The music of Ravel's *Prélude* clearly reflects this texture and its origins as a piano piece. The flowing sixteenth-note line introduced by the oboe and clarinet provides an element of perpetual motion throughout the movement: the line is always present, although it is sometimes passed among several instruments. The *Menuet*, a stately 3/4 dance, was introduced at the French court of Louis XIV in the 1650s, and remained the most popular court dance in Europe for well over a century. Here the *Menuet* is set in the typical three-part (ABA) form of the dance. The opening section features solo lines above a light accompaniment. In the central trio, there is a change to minor key, and a contrasting melody is stated in chords. The *Rigaudon* was a robust Provençal peasant dance that was refined and introduced at the French royal court in the seventeenth century. Ravel's *Rigaudon* features high-spirited outer sections. The more pensive inner section features two lovely themes: the first played by the oboe, and the second by flute and clarinet.

Henry Mancini

***Baby Elephant Walk* (arr. Austin Ralphson)**

The Sonoran Winds begin the second half of the program with another well-known—and funny—piece by Henry Mancini. In 1962, Mancini wrote the score for *Hatari!*, an adventure comedy directed by Howard Hawks, and starring John Wayne. Filmed on location in what is now Tanzania, the film's characters were professional game catchers. Hawks insisted that the actors do all of the interactions with the animals in the film, and one of the most memorable scenes in *Hatari!*—made even more memorable by the goofy musical accompaniment later added by Mancini—was a completely unscripted moment when actress Elsa Martinelli managed to get a trio of baby elephants to follow her down to a waterhole. Mancini's *Baby Elephant Walk*, a kind of elephantine boogie-woogie, became a hit song on the pop charts in 1962. His original

recording was notable for using a calliope, which only served to increase the goofiness factor. The arrangement heard here gives the opening bluesy flourish to flute and clarinet, before horn and clarinet start the piece's underlying groove. The flute gets the first turn at the melody, which is elaborated and decorated by the other players in a series of jazzy solos.

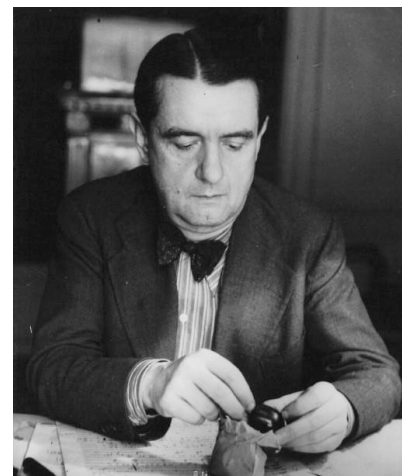
Georges Auric (1899-1983)

Trio for Oboe, Clarinet, and Bassoon

Georges Auric was born in Montpellier, and when his phenomenal talent became apparent, his family moved to Paris when he was 14, so he could study at the Paris Conservatory. Even as a teenager, Auric became part Paris's glittering art scene, associating with several leading composers (including Stravinsky), but also poets (Apollinaire and Cocteau) and painters (Picasso and Braque). In the 1920s Auric became part of a loose association of young composers—with Francis Poulenc, Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, Germaine Tailleferre, and Louis Durey—who would present concerts at the studio of the painter Émile Lejeune, in the Rue Huyghens in Montparnasse, Paris's famously scruffy art district. In a 1920 review of a concert featuring music all six of them, Henri Collet baptized them the "Groupe des Six." "Les Six," a group of six very different personalities, nevertheless had a shared musical goal: creating a straightforward and distinctly French musical style, largely free of foreign (especially German) influences. Auric had a long, successful, and varied career. For decades, he was one of France's leading music journalists, and in the 1960s, he served in one of the most prestigious posts in Paris, as director of the Paris Opéra and the Opéra-Comique. As a composer who worked for some 60 years, his large works include ballets, incidental music, several film scores, and orchestral works. Auric also composed a few chamber works, piano music and over 50 art songs. His *Trio for Oboe, Clarinet, and Bassoon* dates from 1938.

The opening movement, marked *Décidé (Decidedly)*, begins as a lively, good-humored march kicked off by the clarinet.

The bassoon begins a slightly more subdued contrasting episode, but the movement closes with a return of the march and a witty ending. The *Romance* begins with a lovely oboe/clarinet duo, but the theme is soon passed among all three players. The movement continues as a loosely-organized set of variations on his melody. The last movement, *Final*, begins as a fast, swirling waltz. This ends rather abruptly, and oboe introduces a more deliberate, but still playful contrasting trio section. The waltz returns briefly, before the clarinet introduces a second trio, with a new, flowing waltz theme before another abrupt change to a quirky idea with shifting meters. The piece ends with a fast-paced coda.



George Gershwin (1898-1937)

Selections from “Porgy and Bess” (arr. Bill Holcombe)

One of the fascinating things about George Gershwin is the fact that he had feet firmly planted in two different musical worlds. He made his fortune as a composer of Broadway musicals and popular songs, but from very early in his career he also wrote works in what he considered a more “serious” vein. The beginnings of *Porgy and Bess* date to 1926, when Gershwin read DuBose Heyward’s *Porgy*—a novel inspired by characters and situations Heyward observed in the African American community of his home town, Charleston, SC, fictionalized as Catfish Row. Gershwin collaborated with both Heyward and his brother Ira, and completed it in 1935. This represents the more Classical Gershwin—though he himself was a little uncomfortable in labeling this an “opera,” *Porgy and Bess* is one of those great American works (like Bernstein’s *West Side Story* some two decades later) that effectively combines the conventions of opera and Broadway. Produced with an all-Black cast, it was also remarkable in the sensitivity and depth of its portrayal of its characters. With a few exceptions (like Kern’s 1927 musical *Show Boat*), African American characters of the 1920s and 1930s—when they appeared on stage at all—appeared in broadly stereotyped roles or blackface caricatures. *Porgy and Bess* has fully-drawn characters who are treated sympathetically...and who get to sing some of Gershwin’s greatest music! Selections from Bill Holcomb’s woodwind quintet arrangement played here include: *Summertime*, *I Got Plenty O’ Nuttin’*, and *Bess You Is My Woman*.



Zequinha de Abreu (1880-1935)

***Tico-Tico no fubá* (arr. Keith Gemmell)**

Our closer is the upbeat Brazilian song *Tico-Tico no fubá*. The song, written by Zequinha de Abreu in 1917, is a *choro*, a Brazilian popular song form of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Like many Brazilian forms, the *choro* is a blend: its roots include both Western dances like the polka, mazurka and the Spanish-Cuban habanera, and West African drum rhythms. The Portuguese lyrics which were added in the 1930s, translate as *The Sparrow in the Cornmeal*, were a lighthearted and partly nonsensical complaint about a bird that refuses to stay away from the granary. The song was introduced to North America by organist Ethel Smith in a 1937 movie, and sheet music for her



version promptly sold over two million copies. *Tico-Tico* again became a hit in the 1940s with recordings by the Andrews Sisters and the “Brazilian Bombshell” Carmen Miranda. It is played here in a bubbly arrangement by Keith Gemmel. True to *choro* form, *Tico-Tico no fubá* has several contrasting sections, which here offer showy moments for all five players.

PROGRAM

HENRY MANCINI *Theme from “The Pink Panther”* (arr. James Christensen)

JEAN FRANÇAIX *Quartet for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet and Bassoon*

Allegro
Andante
Allegro molto
Allegro vivo

MAURICE RAVEL *Pièce en forme de habanera* (arr. Clarke Kessler)

MAURICE RAVEL *Le Tombeau de Couperin* (arr. Mason Jones)

Prélude
Menuet
Rigaudon

INTERMISSION

HENRY MANCINI *Baby Elephant Walk* (arr. Austin Ralphson)

GEORGES AURIC *Trio for Oboe, Clarinet, and Bassoon*

Décidé
Romance
Final

GEORGE GERSHWIN *Selections from “Porgy and Bess”* (arr. Bill Holcombe)

Summertime
I Got Plenty O’ Nuttin’
Bess You Is My Woman

ZEQUINHA DE ABREU *Tico-Tico no fubá* (arr. Keith Gemmel)

BIOGRAPHIES

Scott Richardson, AZ Phil's principal clarinetist organized this concert, but is unable to perform this concert due to recently scheduled surgery. AZ Phil's second clarinetist, Mary Jackson, will be taking his place. Mary already has developed a local following from the AZ Phil chamber concerts she has organized for the Highlands Center.

Mary Jackson began playing clarinet at age 12 in her hometown of Grand Rapids, Michigan. She currently holds the position of 2nd Clarinetist in the Flagstaff Symphony Orchestra and the Arizona Philharmonic, in addition to performing as a substitute clarinetist with the Phoenix Symphony and Arizona Opera.

Before moving to Arizona in 2012, she was the 2nd Clarinetist of the Oklahoma City Philharmonic and the E-flat Clarinetist of the Wichita Symphony. She has also performed with the Kansas City Symphony and the Utah Shakespearean Festival. She holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Northwestern University, and a Master of Music degree from the University of Missouri - Kansas City Conservatory.



Flutist **Jeannette Hirasawa Moore** has appeared as soloist with the Flagstaff Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Calgary Philharmonic, Ensemble Sir Ernest MacMillan and Hart House Orchestra. Originally from Canada, Jeannette lived in Toronto where she performed as principal flute of the Toronto Pops Orchestra, Toronto Operetta Theatre, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, Hamilton Philharmonic, and Toronto Philharmonic. She received both her Bachelor and Master of Music Degrees in Performance from the University of Toronto and studied with Douglas Stewart and Robert Aitken. In 1995 she toured the Far East with The Phantom of the Opera. Jeannette has served as Principal Flute of the Flagstaff Symphony since 2013, is also principal flute of the Arizona Philharmonic and Verde Valley Sinfonietta and performs with the chamber groups Ponderosa Players, Sonoran Winds and Duo Catalina.

Dr. Laura Arganbright is in demand as an oboist with a diverse portfolio of musical projects including performance, education, and reed-making. She is the principal oboist with the Bakersfield Symphony Orchestra, the Arizona Philharmonic, and the Opera Neo summer festival orchestra. Most recently, Laura performed Oscar Navarro's Oboe Concerto Legacy with the Bakersfield Symphony. Laura has also appeared as a soloist with the conductorless Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra, performing the world premier of Viet Cuong's double oboe concerto Extra(ordinarily) Fancy and with the Arizona Philharmonic performing Alessandro Marcello's Concerto in D minor.



Laura is passionate about inspiring the next generation of musicians and music lovers. She currently serves as the Oboe Teaching Artist for the Los Angeles Philharmonic YOLA program, an El Sistema-based organization that provides music education in historically underserved communities. Laura maintains a robust and competitive private teaching studio and has operated a handmade oboe reed business since 2015. Equally enthusiastic about reed-making pedagogy, Laura has presented master classes at the University of Southern California and serves as the reed-making coach for all current oboe majors.

Laura completed the Doctor of Musical Arts at USC in 2018. She graduated with honors and was awarded the Brandon Mehrle Service Award in recognition of individuals who demonstrate extraordinary support of the Thornton School of Music through a commitment of energy and professional expertise. Laura's mentors include Marion Kuszyk, Joel Timm, and Martin Schuring. When not playing oboe, teaching oboe, or making oboe reeds, Laura can probably be found hiking, camping, backpacking, or generally indulging in a love for nature.

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A native of Virginia, **Karen Teplik** received her Bachelors in Music Performance from the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music where she studied with Michael Hatfield. She completed her Masters of Music Performance from Arizona State University where she studied with Ralph Lockwood, and was the winner of the concerto competition. In addition to being a



free-lance player and private teacher, she is the principal horn of the Tempe Symphony and Tempe Winds, as well as the former principal horn of the Symphony of the Southwest and the Scottsdale Philharmonic. She has played with Southwest Brass, West Valley Symphony, Phoenix Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony and other groups. Karen is principal horn and a founding member of Arizona Philharmonic.

Chip King, founder of the Pinnacle and Catalina Bassoon Quartets was the Assistant Principal / Second Bassoonist of the Grand Rapids Symphony from 1973 to 2008. During that time he was involved with many chamber ensembles,

teaching venues and university music departments in West Michigan. After moving to Phoenix with his wife in 2009 to be near their daughter he has performed with many of the valleys' orchestras including the Phoenix Symphony, the West Valley Symphony, Symphony of the Southwest, Arizona Opera Orchestra, Phoenix Opera Orchestra and Arizona Philharmonic.

