

Clarinet in Quarantine: Music for Clarinet Alone

A non-degree concert by Andrew Wiele, clarinet

Sunday, November 8th, 3:30PM

In the Siquelfield Music Center Performance Hall

Program

For an Actor: Monologue for Clarinet in A (1978).....Shulamit Ran (b.1949)

Three Pieces for Clarinet Solo (1918).....Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

I.

II.

III.

Sonata for Clarinet (1972).....Edison Denisov (1929-1996)

Lento, poco rubato

Allegro giusto

Intermission

Double Life (2007).....Eric Mandat (b. 1957)

Double Life

Deep Thoughts

To Be Continued...

Wings (1981).....Joan Tower (b.1938)

Program Notes

Shulamit Ran is an Israeli-American composer who moved to New York City at the age of fourteen. She has led a long and successful career as a performer, including being the second woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for music in 1990 for her *Symphony*. Her works have been played by groups all over the world, and she has won many fellowships and commissions from several music groups and foundations, mostly in America.

Her works are a fairly even mix of chamber music, instrumental solo music, orchestral, and vocal/choral work. She has written several pieces for clarinet, including *Apprehensions* for Voice, Clarinet and Piano (1979), *A Prayer* for a modified quintet (1981), *Concerto da Camera 1* for Woodwind Quintet (1985), *Double Vision* for Woodwind Quintet, Brass Quintet, and Piano (1976), *Private Game* for Clarinet and Cello, *Two Scenes* for clarinet solo, and *The Show Goes On* for clarinet and orchestra.

For an Actor: Monologue for Clarinet was written in 1978 for Laura Flax of the Da Capo players. Ran credits Laura for the sound of her clarinet writing moving forward: "In all of my clarinet music Laura is present. The rich sound, blazing technique, the 'brain and guts' that she brought to her playing, and her remarkable person, have inspired me in so many ways during the four decades of our friendship and beyond." (Program Notes for *Spirit* by Shulamit Ran, 2018) *For an Actor* was also written in memory of Hazel Flax, Laura's mother. Ran describes the work this way in the program notes: "*For an Actor*... owes its inspiration in large part to the intensely personal ethos with which the clarinet is associated in my mind. To me, the instrument in its contemporary usage suggests an incredible gamut of gestures, dynamics, and

emotions. Accordingly, in *Monologue*, the player assumes the role of a virtuoso actor who, by purely musical means, goes through a kind of wordless 'monodrama'."

Igor Stravinsky is one of the most influential composers of the 20th century. His music is considered to be some of the finest in the Western Fine Art tradition, and he has helped shape multiple musical movements. A Russian-born composer, he first moved to France in 1920 and then to America in 1939. *Three Pieces*, written in 1918, falls within his first "Russian" period, shortly before his compositions turned neoclassical. Around the time the piece was written, Stravinsky was struggling financially due to royalty disputes. A philanthropist named Werner Reinhardt assisted Stravinsky in completing his latest work at the time, *L'Histoire du Soldat*. Stravinsky in return dedicated the work to Reinhart, gave him the original manuscript, and also dedicated the *Three Pieces* to Reinhart, who was an amateur clarinetist.

The first two movements of the piece are for Clarinet in A, and have a refined quality. The first movement is slow and beautiful, while the second is loud, soaring, and acrobatic. The third movement, however, is for Clarinet in Bb, and has a more irreverent and bombastic tone. It has been speculated that the third movement was heavily inspired by Sidney Bechet, a popular clarinetist and soprano saxophonist who played Jazz in Europe in the early 20th century, as the style of this third movement is heavily reminiscent of Bechet's style.

Edison Denisov was a Russian composer in the USSR during the second half of the twentieth century. He studied at the Moscow Conservatory from 1951-56, and would later go on to teach at the Conservatory. While he was a student, he studied

the music of Mahler, Debussy, Boulez and Stockhausen, carefully studying contemporary compositional techniques, and actively experimented as a composer. He was considered part of the "Underground" division of Soviet music at the time; in 1979 the Sixth Congress of the Union of Soviet Composers blacklisted him for unapproved participation of Western festivals of Soviet Music. Near the end of his life, Denisov led the Association for Contemporary Music once it had been reestablished in Moscow in 1990.

Denisov's music consists mostly of chamber music, concertos for solo instrument and orchestra, and operas. His sound is reminiscent of the Second Viennese School. Mostly atonal in its sound, Denisov's voice reflects the struggle of composing new music under the USSR. The music is often rhythmically complex and motivically conceived. While Denisov wrote many pieces for clarinet, including a quintet, concerto, two sonatas, and many chamber works, their difficulty often prohibits even undergraduate performers from approaching the pieces. The *Sonata for Clarinet* was written while Denisov taught at the Moscow Conservatory with the cooperation of the student Lew Mikhailow.

Eric Mandat has been a pioneer of extended performance techniques and modern clarinet music for over thirty years. An American musician, Mandat graduated from the University of North Texas, and has graduate degrees both from Yale and Eastman Schools of Music. Until recently he actively performed and toured around the country, and served as faculty at Southern Illinois University, where he received a Distinguished Scholar award. He continues to compose new pieces

Mandat's compositions are focused mainly on the development of modern techniques on the clarinet. Most of his pieces include some form of microtones,

multiphonics, and other modern techniques to create new and interesting sounds on the clarinet. Mandat has also created an etude book, *Finger Food*, while not focused on modern techniques, is useful for finger technique.

Double Life is composed in honor of the clarinetist/composer William O. Smith, and highlights both sides of the composer's life. Mandat calls these two sides "Bill" and "William O." representing the Jazz and Fine Art sides of Smith's music. The first movement focuses on this duality by the use of two clarinets played by the performer simultaneously. The second movement focuses on William O., an expansive and meditative piece utilizing a PVC extension to give the clarinet lower notes. *To Be Continued...* the third movement, is "always moving forward, always energetic, just like Bill", utilizing microtones and circular breathing to create its soundscape.

Joan Tower is one of the most important and successful women composers, performers, conductors, and educators of the twentieth century, if not all time. Her works have been commissioned and performed by ensembles, orchestras, and performers all over the world. In 2020 she was given the Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award by the *Chamber Music American*. Her works have been nominated for and won several Grammy awards. In 1970, she founded the Da Capo Chamber Players, and was their pianist for fifteen years. She currently is the Asher Edelman Professor of Music at Bard College, where she has taught since 1972.

Wings was written for Laura Flax, who played with Tower in Da Capo Chamber Players for many years. Flax premiered the piece at Merkin Hall in New York City on December 14, 1981. The following are Tower's words on the piece. "The image behind the piece is one of a large bird—perhaps a falcon—at times flying very high gliding along the thermal currents, barely moving. At other moments, the bird goes into

elaborate flight patterns that loop around, diving downwards, gaining tremendous speeds.”