

## **Zweites Hornkonzert – Richard Strauss (1864-1949)**

Richard Strauss's second horn concerto (1942) is considered a very important piece in horn repertoire due to, amongst others, its powerful and distinguished core, heart and periphery. Written nearly sixty years after Strauss wrote his first horn concerto, the piece demonstrates much more lyricism and maturity. The German composer's relation with the Romantic era is very clear throughout the whole piece. The complexity of the technical and musical passages require a soloist with great control of the horn in order to perform the piece as Strauss intended.

Originally accompanied by an orchestra, the piece is divided into three movements. The first movement, *Allegro*, starts with an impressive and spectacular phrase followed by many lines where the horn is totally free and supported by a light accompaniment. The second movement, *Andante con moto*, brings us into a new atmosphere of tranquility and peace that wasn't found in the first movement of the concerto. The exchanges between the horn and the accompaniment are very intimate, providing a very unique sense of delicacy. The last movement, *Rondo allegro molto*, is an energetic finale to this heroic piece. The phrases are constantly moving forward, resulting in a very exciting and broad ending.

## **Sonate pour cor en fa et piano – Jane Vignery (1913-1974)**

Jane Vignery (1913-1974) is a Belgian composer who was raised in a family of musicians and had a mother who was also a composer. Shortly after finishing her studies in Paris, she composed the Sonata for F Horn and piano, a piece that was very well received, winning the first prize in the Emile Mathieu contest, in France<sup>1</sup>, and thereby adding one of the very few horn pieces written by a woman to the horn repertoire. One could qualify this sonata by having a playful, energetic and intriguing spirit. These elements are found throughout the whole work, which don't stop catching the audience's attention. Faithful to the style of the sonata, the chamber music feeling between the horn and the piano makes us appreciate all the subtleties of the piece. The passing of phrases from one instrument to the other shows the complexity of the piece.

The sonata is divided into three movements. Followed by an assumed and firm introduction, the *Allegro* is supported by a heroic and joyful energy. In addition to this dynamic spirit, we also find ourselves listening to some very melodious passages which introduce the *con sordino* sounds, played with a mute for the first time in the piece. We also hear the stopped horn throughout the piece, displaying some of the effects of the horn and making the sonata even more colorful. The *Allegro* ends in a powerful way and leads us in a captivating *Lento ma non troppo*. In this second movement, the dialogue between the instrumentalists is put on the foreground. The musical phrases are filled with tension and release, making this movement a big crescendo of emotion that leads into an intense climax which slowly dies before the last movement. The piece finishes with a short *Allegro ben moderato* which perfectly reflects the

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<sup>1</sup> GUBIN, Éliane, JACQUES, Catherine, PIETTE, Valérie et PUISSANT, Jean. *Dictionnaire des femmes belges XIX et XXe siècles*, Bruxelles, Éditions Racine, 2006, 643 p.

playful spirit of the French style. The short notes accompanied by a bouncy and light character end the piece in a happy and refreshing way.

### **Sonate pour cor, trompette et trombone – Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)**

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) is a French composer who wrote extensively for chamber ensembles. Even though he composed this sonata at a very young age, one can already notice the maturity and the depth of the musical speech that surrounds the whole piece. The Poulenc Sonata for Brass (1922) is a fascinating and entertaining demonstration of delicacy, lightness and contrasts. Only few other pieces written for this formation display this much sensitivity through thrilling melodic creativity and sudden changes of moods. Through his music, Poulenc brings us into a world of wide imagination in which it is simply impossible to lose interest.

Like many of his chamber music pieces, the Poulenc's Sonata for brass is divided into three short movements. The first movement, *Allegro moderato*, can be perceived as a succession of dances, sometimes very energetic and lively, and some other times, more intimate and calm. The second movement, *Andante*, is felt as a nostalgia from the first movement, as we recognize some elements that we heard in the *Allegro moderato*. The three instruments are exchanging the theme in a beautiful and flowing way, keeping the melody alive through the movement. Poulenc concludes his sonata with a very festive *Rondeau* that will leave any audience with a genuine joyful feeling.