

The Trustees of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial present

HILL AKAHORI DUO

Sponsored by Littleton Coin Company



Brahms, Bernstein, Arnold, Debussy

**Thomas Hill, clarinet
Elika Akahori, piano**

**Sunday, July 6, 2014
2:00 PM**

**THE SAINT-GAUDENS NHS
CORNISH ♦ NEW HAMPSHIRE**



A note from
Fern Meyers, Concert Series Director

The Trustees of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial are grateful to all those who attend and generously support concerts at Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, a National Park for the Arts. In the spirit of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, who enjoyed fine music, singing and playing the flute, the Memorial organized a summer concert in the Little Studio in 1952. What began with a single piano recital has grown to an annual series of 11 concerts, presented to those who visit the park. We give special thanks to the charitable individuals and corporations who are sponsoring select programs this season.

The 2014 summer concerts feature outstanding musicians who bring their talents to an eclectic series of programs drawing from classical, jazz, ethnic and musical theater genres. We hope that you will make these concerts a Sunday afternoon tradition and introduce others to music at the park.

The Saint-Gaudens Memorial is a private, non-profit New Hampshire organization, established in 1919 to maintain a living memorial to Augustus Saint-Gaudens on the site of his home and studios. In 1964, the property—including structures, works of art and furnishings—was donated to the United States for public ownership and in 1965 Congress created the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site. The Memorial partners with the historic site to increase public awareness of the life, world and work of Saint-Gaudens; preserve and interpret the cultural resources at the site; and promote the arts in general. We do this through educational and artistic programs, advice and other forms of support.

*Cover image: Double Eagle ("Liberty") \$20.00 gold coin,
Augustus Saint-Gaudens, 1907*

PROGRAM

Malcolm Arnold (1921-2006) Sonatina for Clarinet and Piano

Allegro con brio
Larghetto
Furioso

Three Short Pieces Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Le Petit Nègre
Serenade for the Doll, *Children's Corner Suite, mvt. 3*
Golliwog's Cakewalk, *Children's Corner Suite, mvt. 6*

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

INTERMISSION

Sonata in F minor, Op.120 No.1 Johannes Brahms (1883-1897)

Allegro appassionato
Andante un poco Adagio
Allegretto grazioso
Vivace

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano (1941-42) Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

Grazioso
Andantino, vivace e leggiero

About the Artists

Thomas Hill, clarinetist, is known for his work as a soloist and chamber musician. He is currently the principal clarinetist of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra and a member of the Boston Chamber Music Society since 1983. Mr. Hill earned both a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Clarinet performance with Honors from the New England Conservatory. He also attended the Cleveland Institute of Music where he studied under Robert Marcellus. As a chamber musician, Hill has performed, toured, recorded and broadcast throughout the United States, Latin America, and

Asia as a member of the Aeolian Chamber Players and the Boston Chamber Music Society. He has played on innumerable concert and festival series, and has been widely engaged as a soloist and ensemble performer in New York, Los Angeles and Boston. Mr. Hill is the former principal clarinetist of the New Haven Symphony, the Long Beach Symphony, the Mainly Mozart Festival Orchestra, the Handel and Haydn Society, the Cascade Festival Orchestra and the San Diego Symphony. He is also a former member of the Kansas City Woodwind Quintet Hill is also a former faculty member of the New England Conservatory, the Boston Conservatory, Longy School of Music, the Foundation for Chinese Performing Arts, New York University, the University of California Los Angeles, the University of Massachusetts Amherst and the University of Missouri.

Eliko Akahori, pianist, has performed as a soloist, chamber musician, and collaborative pianist to great acclaim on four continents. Recent performances include Berg's *KammerKonzert* with violinist James Buswell, and recitals with bassist Larry Wolfe and saxophonist Ken Radnofsky. In 2003, Ms. Akahori received the first prize, Coleman-Barstow Award in the 57th Coleman Chamber Ensemble Competition. She has also collaborated in chamber music concerts, recordings, and radio and television broadcasts with members of the Berlin, Chicago, Montreal, Boston, Vienna and San Francisco Orchestras, among others. She has been serving as a pianist at Pacific Music Festival in Japan since 2004, and she is currently on the faculty at Wellesley College.

PROGRAM NOTES

Born in Northampton, Malcolm Arnold is one of the eminent figures of 20th century British music, with a remarkable catalogue of major concert works to his credit, including nine symphonies, seven ballets, two operas, one musical, over twenty concertos, two string quartets, and music for brass-band and wind-band. He also wrote 132 film scores, among these are some of the finest works ever composed for the medium including *Bridge on the River Kwai* (for which, in 1958, he was the first British composer ever to win an Oscar), *Inn of the Sixth Happiness* (for which he received an Ivor Novello Award in 1958), *Hobson's Choice* and *Whistle Down the Wind*.

His *Sonatina for Clarinet and Piano* is wonderfully given to the voice and acoustical vernacular of the instruments for which it is written. Conveying variously a particular puckish charm and poignant grace, it is typical of Arnold and most typical of the guarded and yet ultimately surrendered temperament that British music renders at its truest. The first movement is a

bold but impish affair in three brief themes. Its lilting second movement is a simple A, B, A, form set in spare tenderness. And it's third movement, a no-holds-barred, self-assured dash through virtuosic abandon.

Children's Corner Suite

Claude Debussy had only one child, a daughter named Claude-Emma, whom he affectionately called 'Chou-chou'. She was a significant musical inspiration and possibly the only person Debussy ever loved throughout his turbulent life. In 1908 he composed the *Children's Corner Suite* and dedicated it to Chou-chou who was then three years old. He based the six-movement piece upon childhood and how a young child might perceive the world, musically describing Chou-chou's toys and story books, a French lullaby, an elephant that lived in a Paris park and gently falling snow flakes. The piece exemplifies Debussy's use of non-traditional scales and semi-tones and his "impressionistic style" of composition that profoundly influenced other composers.

Syncopated rhythms were popular around the turn of the 20th century and often associated with the Southern Black American ragtime musicians such as Scott Joplin. Debussy incorporated ragtime and syncopated rhythms into his suite, most evident in *Le Petit Nègre* and *Golliwog's Cakewalk*.

Le Petit Nègre was intended to be the sixth movement of Debussy's *Children's Corner* suite. It was named for a jet-black, somewhat silly character called a "Golliwog" which first came to life in 1895 in the children's book *The Adventures of Two Dutch Dolls*. The book was illustrated by Florence Upton who depicted the "Golliwog" as a caricature of an American Black minstrel with large, white-rimmed eyes, thick lips and frizzy black hair. The Golliwog character was admired for its bravery, adventurousness and love for White people.

Eventually Upton's caricature was mass-produced by several companies as a rag-doll, including Steiff. It was a popular toy into the 1970s but renamed "Golly Doll" in 1910. Since that time "Gollies" have been a controversial topic of debate but their important place in cultural history is indisputable. In his tribute to the Golliwog, Debussy uses lively rhythms, whimsy and humor. In *Serenade of a Doll*, Debussy described an Oriental porcelain doll and made use of the pentatonic scale, often associated with Asian music. He noted that the pianist should play the entire movement with the soft pedal. Some musicians believe that Debussy meant to call the movement "Serenade for the Doll."

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano

Arthur Honegger (1892-1955), Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) and Darius Milhaud (1892-1974) have survived as the most famous members of a circle of composers that gathered in Paris around 1920. This group of five men and one woman (Germaine Tailleferre, 1892-1983) became known as “Les Six,” a title intended to acknowledge the loose circle of Russian Nationalistic composers who worked in Saint Petersburg (from 1856–1870) known as “The Five.” “Les Six” often convened at Le Boeuf Sur le Toit (The Ox on the Roof), a popular bar in the artistic section of Montparnasse. They shared an ideological rejection of the French Impressionistic and German academic styles of composition but established their unique individualistic styles.

Although “Les Six” never had a cohesive position, the composers shared irreverence for the musical aesthetics of prominent composers such as Debussy (1862-1918), Fauré (1845-1924) and Wagner (1813-1883). Their inspiration was the composer Erik Satie (1866-1925), who dared to break from musical tradition and may be described as a surrealist composer whose work parallels the writer and filmmaker Jean Cocteau. “Les Six” followed Satie’s nihilistic example and turned to jazz and themes from popular music heard in cabarets and cafés, often quoted humorously in their compositions with intended parody of didactic academic style. A good example of this burlesque is exhibited by Milhaud in his score *Le Boeuf Sur le Toit*.

Throughout his career the self-trained composer Francis Poulenc was attracted to the sound of woodwind instruments and often featured them in his compositions. He composed his *Sonata for Clarinet* during the summer of 1962 and dedicated it to the memory of his good friend Arthur Honegger, who had died of a heart attack following a long illness. Poulenc could not know that he, too, was to die from heart failure only a few months after he completed his clarinet sonata. The composer was to have premiered his sonata with the clarinetist Benny Goodman. Three months later, however, Goodman performed it with Leonard Bernstein in Carnegie Hall at a memorial concert for Poulenc.

Poulenc’s markings for the clarinetist and pianist suggest a heart-felt tribute to Honnégar. After a somewhat jarring opening, the first movement is to be played *tristamente* (“sadly”) followed by a stately section marked *Très calme*. The middle movement, *Romanza*, is expressive with an introductory flourish from the clarinet leading to an ascending main theme to

be played “very gentle and melancholy.” A swirling theme from the clarinet appears throughout the movement which ends serenely. The energetic last movement is a more playful contrast to the previous movements to be played “Fast and with fire.” It has lyrical episodes interspersed with chromatic passages that explore the range of the clarinet. Poulenc concludes the sonata with a short, frisky coda.

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano in F minor Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

In 1890, when Brahms delivered the manuscript of his String Quintet in G, Opus 111, to his publisher, he remarked that no further compositions were to be expected from him. He was only fifty seven, but he said that he had “tormented himself to no purpose lately” in trying to create. He complained that it was different from the past, when “things always came easily to me.” That he did not cease to compose at that time is due largely to his beguiling

encounter with the clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld, the principal clarinetist of the Meiningen orchestra, who was, by all accounts, a very great artist.

Brahms asked him for the favor of a private recital, with no one else in attendance. Mühlfeld played a large part of his repertory and discussed his instrument and its technical and expressive possibilities with the composer. Brahms had written a great deal for the clarinet as an orchestral instrument, but now he seemed determined to absorb everything he could from a master player. His immediate response to Mühlfeld’s playing was to compose two chamber works—the *Trio for Clarinet, Violoncello, and Piano, Opus 114*, and the *Quintet for Clarinet and Strings, Opus 115*. These were first publicly performed on December 12, 1891 in Berlin. The concert’s sensational success no doubt encouraged Brahms to return to the clarinet three years later. During the summer of 1894 Brahms wrote his very last chamber music compositions—two sonatas for clarinet and piano, naturally intended for Mühlfeld.

In both of the clarinet sonatas the melody instrument projects an autumnal lyricism that seems to fuse with the way Mühlfeld apparently played his instrument. With the F minor sonata, as always in Brahms, the structure is highly refined and intricate, but the lyricism flowers in the composer’s treatment of the clarinet part, which features wide ranging leaps within a lyrical line and delicately rapid ornamental turns (in the second movement). Both of these features are especially characteristic of the clarinet. At the beginning the piece smolders with suppressed passion; we should remember that Brahms often used the key of F-minor for passionate

expression (in an early *Piano Sonata, Opus 5*, the great *Piano Quintet, Opus 34*, and a '*Cello sonata, Opus 99*). The two inner movements provide balancing relaxation. The slow movement is an ecstatic reverie, a soft night music that moves through gentle pensive thoughts shaped into a flexible A-B-A form. The third movement, one of Brahms's characteristic intermezzos, retains a certain dance quality, a link to the Austrian Ländler, though elevated to a level of high refinement. The final extrovert rondo starts off with the tolling of three half-notes, a figure that Brahms employs in many guises throughout the rondo, both in its main theme areas and in the episodes. For all its earlier sense of autumnal restraint, the close is energetic enough to show a Brahms still youthful in spirit, even if less and less so in body.

Clarinet Sonata (1941-42)

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

The compositions of Leonard Bernstein were, from their beginning, a harbinger of his dexterous genius. His clarinet sonata is case in point. Written when he was barely 22 years old, it exhibits the distinctly bursting élan and lyricism that one might hope for in an emergent, enlightened personal (and cultural) blossoming. Its pregnant songfulness and intricate rhythmic chatter, typical of American music at that moment, brings deft charm to crafty forms with bracing ingenuity. The initial movement, after a brief, almost Hindemithian opening few bars of vertical harmonies, shakes loose into happy horizontal sweeps (over the rooftops in *West Side Story*?) and a promise of wonderful things to come in his American musical utterance. The second movement, following a brief introduction thoroughly reminiscent of Copland (especially his opera, *The Tender Land*), gallops forth in a snazzy 5/8 meter which pauses only for a short, again Coplandesque, interlude before launching into an irrepressible, freight-train wild ride to the finish.

Arnold, Brahms and Bernstein notes by Thomas Hill

Debussy and Poulenc notes by Fern Meyers



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