

Charlotte Ethington, oboe

Doctoral Recital Series
Recital Hall | 6 April 2018 | 7:30 p.m.

Program

Concerto in A major, BWV 1055

Johann Sebastian Bach

- 1.
2. Larghetto
3. Allegro ma non tanto

Oboe Concerto

Ralph Vaughan Williams

1. Rondo Pastorale
2. Minuet and Musette
3. Finale [Scherzo]

Rina Kim, piano

~Intermission~

Quartet for Oboe and Strings

Gordon Jacob

1. Allegro moderato
2. Scherzo: Allegro molto
3. Andante semplice
4. Rondo: Allegro molto

Dana Zhou, violin
Christiano Rodrigues, viola
Wesley Skinner, cello

ASU Herberger Institute
FOR DESIGN AND THE ARTS
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

School of Music

Program Notes

Each of the three works performed tonight has a significant connection to British oboist **Leon Goossens (1897-1988)**, who is often referred to as the father of the English school of oboe playing. Goossens' influence in the oboe world extends far past his home country. He is considered to be "responsible almost single-handedly for putting the oboe back on the map as a solo instrument" after a late-nineteenth-century decline in virtuoso oboe playing (Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, Yale University Press 2004, p. 196).

Goossens, who "came from a distinguished musical family of Belgian origin," began studying the oboe in 1908 (Burgess, 197). Seven years later, seventeen-year-old Leon began playing in the Queen's Hall Orchestra. Subsequently he became the principal oboist of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and later an active solo performer. In these capacities he "transformed the oboe from a necessary, but often unpleasant, bleating noise into the instrument capable of producing unimagined refinement and beauty of tone" (Burgess, 197). Composers eagerly wrote for him and "the unprecedented number of (works) that were dedicated to him has been exceeded only in the case of Heinz Holliger" (Burgess, 196). Two such works are on the program tonight. Though the first piece on the program was written well before Goossens' time, he was nonetheless instrumental in its revival.

J.S. Bach: Concerto in A Major, BWV 1055

This concerto is a reconstruction of Bach's Concerto for Harpsichord in A Major, one of seven harpsichord concertos he wrote while in Leipzig. As director of Leipzig's collegium musicum, Bach had such a high demand for new music that he "transcribed some of his violin, oboe, and oboe d'amore concerti into harpsichord concerti" (Wolff, C., & Emery, W. Bach, Johann Sebastian. Grove Music Online). While the original manuscripts for the harpsichord concerti survived, the original manuscripts for the violin, oboe, and oboe d'amore concerti did not. Therefore the original instrumentation for BWV 1055 is uncertain. However, oboe d'amore seems the most likely candidate due to the key and the range of the music.

So, **what is the oboe d'amore?** (It.: 'oboe of love'; Fr.hautbois d'amour; Ger. Liebes[h]oboe)

In the words of Geoffrey Burgess: "The oboe family, as used in Western music, consists of a group of conical-bore double-reed woodwind instruments in a variety of sizes. The most common member of the family, and the one usually referred to as the oboe, is the treble instrument in C. ...The modern family (also) includes the oboe d'amore in A, the English horn in F and the bass oboe in C" (Page, J., Burgess, G., Haynes, B., & Finkelman, M. (2001). Oboe. Grove Music Online).

According to Michael Finkelman, "during the second decade of the 18th century," Leipzig "appears to have been a centre for oboe d'amore making," with the earliest being made around 1720 (Page, et. al.). Bach first wrote for oboe d'amore in 1723, the same year he arrived in Leipzig. He frequently wrote obbligatos for d'amore in his choral works.

After Bach's time, the instrument was not often used. But "renewed interest in the music of J.S. Bach led to the development in the late 19th century of a new version of the oboe d'amore with 'modern' keywork and bore proportions" (Page, et. al.). Several decades later, "the British musicologist Sir Donald Tovey proposed to Goossens a reconstruction of Bach's A major harpsichord concerto for oboe d'amore, giving the revived instrument its first concerto" (Burgess, 190). Goossens first performed the work on November 21, 1937 with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Ralph Vaughan Williams: Oboe Concerto (1944)

Vaughan Williams wrote his oboe concerto for Goossens to perform at the BBC Proms. Goossens later remarked: "Unfortunately my first attempts to play Vaughan Williams' Concerto in 1944 were thwarted by the attacks of buzz-bombs, which closed down the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts for that year" (Carole Rosen, *The Goossens*, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993. P. 255). The first performance was given in London in May, 1945.

Gordon Jacob: Oboe Quartet (1938)

As a genre, the oboe quartet does not consist of four oboes but rather of oboe, violin, viola, and cello—the same instrumentation as the string quartet, but with oboe taking the place of the first violin. Many oboe quartets were written around Mozart's time. Goossens "was interested in having modern companion pieces to play with the Mozart Oboe Quartet," and "led a revival of the genre" (Burgess, 209). This is one of several oboe quartets dedicated to Goossens.