

personal problems and those related to the pandemic.

The album includes works by Antonio Fraioli, Remigio Coco, Giacomo Miluccio, Sergio Brusca, Giovanni Mattaliano, Augustin Kubizek, Francesco Belli, John Cage, Guglielmo Cappetti, Béla Kovács, Paul Jeanjean, Antonio Lauro, Franco Migliacci/Domenico Modugno. Many of the works on this album are short pieces between 2 to 5 minutes and a wonderful introduction to a wide array of unaccompanied clarinet works for programming consideration.

Rhythm Changes for Clarinet by Antonio Fraioli is an energetic and exciting composition that tasks the player with, as the title states, rhythm changes and athletic jumps and leaps around the instrument. A wonderful addition to our repertoire! *Blue in reed* by Remigio Coco is a brief, slow and lyrical work similar to a short tune. *Rhapsodie* by Miluccio is an impressive, melodious work often

performed in recitals. Fraioli takes the listener on an exciting journey with his performance.

Koron-Kype by Sergio Brusca is a fun and energetic work with an element of playfulness. *Pessoa* by Giovanni Mattaliano explores a wide array of colors and characters. Mattaliano himself is a classical and jazz clarinetist who blends the two styles beautifully in this composition.

A longer work at just under 13 minutes, *Missa Choralis*, Op. 44/3 by Augustin Kubizek is a collection of short character pieces. *Capriccio No. 7* by Francesco Belli is a short and delightfully performed vignette of just over a minute.

The *Sonata* by John Cage has three short movements and explores the athleticism and lyricism of the clarinet. A charming piece, *Iris* by Guglielmo Cappetti is in a waltz-like style. Well known to many, the *Hommage à Béla Bartók* by Béla Kovács is an exciting nod to Bartók's compositions.

It is nice to hear *Studio moderno No. 5* by Paul Jeanjean performed in this collection and Fraioli's performance illustrates the beauty of these compositions, which are much more than etudes.

Carora by Antonio Lauro is a Venezuelan waltz originally for guitar. The final work on the album is a famous Italian hit, *Nel blu dipinto di blu (Volare)* by Franco Migliacci/Domenico Modugno translated as flying.

As so many of us were isolated during the COVID-19 lockdown and unable to make music with others, many turned to solo playing and exploration of new mediums to continue our relationship with music. Antonio Fraioli's journey through this collection of solo clarinet music is a satisfying listen. The music is performed with great artistry and finesse and presents pieces that should be added to our live performance repertoire.

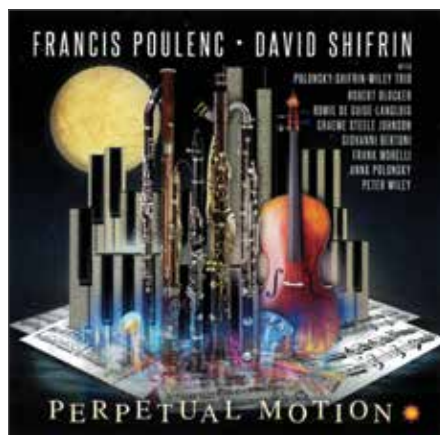
—Julianne Kirk Doyle

AUDIO NOTES

by Karl Kolbeck

Perpetual Motion. David Shifrin, clarinet; Robert Blocker, piano; Romie de Guise-Langlois, clarinet; Graeme Steele Johnson, basset horn; Giovanni Bertoni, bass clarinet; Frank Morelli, bassoon; Anna Polonsky, piano; Peter Wiley, cello; Polonsky-Shifrin-Wiley Trio. F. Poulenc: *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano*, FP 184; *Sonata for Two Clarinets*, FP 7; *Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon*, FP 32A; *Sonata for Clarinet, Basset Horn and Bass Clarinet*, FP 33A; *Trio for Clarinet, Cello and Piano*, FP 43; F. Poulenc/arr. D. Shifrin and R. Blocker: *Mouvements perpétuels*, FP 14A. Musica Solis, MS202105 . Total Time: 59:36.

Celebrated clarinetist and Yale School of Music faculty member David Shifrin is joined by former students, colleagues and friends on this 2021 release featuring clarinet works of Francis Poulenc. Innovative renditions of well-known masterworks are presented alongside world-premiere recordings of transcriptions and arrangements that affirm the composer's fondness for wind instruments.



Completed shortly before the end of Poulenc's life, the *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano*, FP 184 (1962) is arguably one of his best known and frequently performed clarinet works. With a multitude of recordings in existence, Shifrin and pianist Robert Blocker manage to present a performance both refreshing and novel while respecting tradition. Both performers are greatly attuned to each other and the music itself, capturing moments ranging from lighthearted to serious. Shifrin's

technique is very clean and polished; individual notes within any of the technical passages come across with the utmost clarity and balance. Shifrin's warm, mellow tone is especially conducive to the haunting quality of the second movement and his flexibility and control lend to a truly captivating performance throughout.

Poulenc composed a great deal of chamber music for wind instruments and two early examples featuring clarinet are included on this disc. Poulenc's *Sonata for Two Clarinets*, FP 7 (1918) was his first chamber work to be published by Chester and suggests the influence Igor Stravinsky had on the young composer. Shifrin is joined by clarinetist Romie de Guise-Langlois to effectively capture the essence of this rather short and quirky work. Exceptional phrasing is exhibited throughout, even when parts are deliberately in conflict with one another. Shifrin and de Guise-Langlois share a uniform tonal concept that produces an extraordinary blend of their individual parts, along with precise articulation, releases and intonation. Composed just

four years later, Poulenc's *Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon*, FP 32A (1922) features many of the hallmarks of musical style embodied by *Les Six*. Bassoonist Frank Morelli joins Shifrin on this delightfully witty piece. An ever-present connection to the musical line permeates the work, and contrasting timbres of clarinet and bassoon complement each other quite well thanks to the brilliant musicianship of Shifrin and Morelli.

As stated by Shifrin in the CD jacket, "Poulenc loved the sound of wind instruments. His music can be so funny and irreverent and transcends genres and instrumentations." The latter part of this quote is especially true as Shifrin presents two world premiere recordings of transcriptions of Poulenc's chamber music. *Sonata for Clarinet, Bass Horn and Bass Clarinet*, FP 33A (1922) was originally composed for horn, trumpet and trombone. The homogenous sound of the clarinet family is well-suited to this work and an ample substitute for the original scoring for brass. Graeme Steele Johnson (basset horn) and Giovanni Bertoni (bass clarinet) perform alongside Shifrin with the utmost sensitivity and care to ensure the integrity of Poulenc's music is never lost. Especially noteworthy is the final "Rondeau" movement where all players adeptly match articulation styles and individual technical abilities contribute to an exciting conclusion. *Trio for Clarinet, Cello and Piano*, FP 43 (1926) was originally composed for oboe, bassoon and piano. Substituting clarinet and cello is a natural fit, and the committed performance by the Polonsky-Shifrin-Wiley Trio would make it seem as though this was the original intent all along. Shifrin's innate musical ability, delicate phrasing and attention to detail are equaled by his partners in this terrific performance.

Composed at a young age and one of Poulenc's most popular piano works, *Mouvements perpétuels*, FP 14A (1918) has been skillfully arranged for clarinet and piano by Shifrin and Blocker. The arrangement stays very true to the original, with the clarinet predominantly taking the melodic line with support from the piano. The pleasant and carefree nature of the original version is preserved

by Shifrin and Blocker; their performance exemplifies Poulenc's *joie de vivre* in this world-premiere recording.

Perpetual Motion is a wonderfully produced album that offers a little bit of something for everyone. It is sure to serve as a remarkable source of reference for Poulenc's works for clarinet. The liner notes contain biographies for all performers along with program notes authored by Graeme Steele Johnson that provide valuable insight into the compositions. The playing exhibited by Shifrin and all performers is outstanding, and special recognition should also go out to producer Seunghee Lee and the recording engineers who did a splendid job of capturing the complexities of clarinet sound in these recordings.

Here With You. Anthony McGill, clarinet; Gloria Chien, piano. J. Brahms: *Sonata in F minor for Clarinet and Piano*, Op. 120, No. 1, *Sonata in E♭ major for Clarinet and Piano*, Op. 120, No. 2; J. Montgomery: *Peace*; C. M. von Weber: *Grand Duo Concertant*, Op. 48. Cedille Records, CDR 90000 207. Total Time: 67:15.



When the world came to a halt during the pandemic, the principal clarinetist of the New York Philharmonic, Anthony McGill, and acclaimed pianist Gloria Chien found time in their otherwise busy lives to create an album of works they had always longed to record. This 2021 release features masterworks by Brahms and Weber along with a world-premiere recording of a recent composition by Jessie Montgomery.

McGill and Chien have collaborated many times over the past 15 years but,

according to the liner notes, the works of Brahms and Weber included on this album are "... the ones we feel closest to." This sentiment is very apparent from the first few phrases of Johannes Brahms's *Sonata in F minor for Clarinet and Piano*, Op. 120, No. 1 (1894) in which McGill and Chien's personal connection to the music is undeniable. Exquisite phrasing is demonstrated throughout the first movement with each performer keenly aware of the other in a musical dialogue that is the very definition of collaboration. McGill's tone has a perfect balance of warmth and ring and floats effortlessly while supported by the piano in the second movement, a truly beautiful and nuanced performance brimming with subtleties of character. The technical aptitude of Chien and McGill is fully revealed in the final two movements as even the most demanding passages sound effortless and controlled, adding to the excitement of the sonata's climactic ending.