



Amy

Music at Bennington College

Concert Series

presents

Margaret Mills
and
Elizabeth Lauer
pianists

Sunday, May 4, 1997

3:00 p.m.

at the

Deane Carriage Barn

* p r o g r a m *

Élégie **FRANCIS POULENC**
(1899 - 1963)

En blanc et noir **CLAUDE DEBUSSY**
(1862 - 1918)

Avec emportement
à mon ami, A. Kussewitsky
Lent, Sombre
à Lieutenant Jacques Charlot
tué à l'ennemi en 1915, le 3 Mars.
Scherzando
à mon ami Igor Strawinsky

Six Haiku (1994) **ELIZABETH LAUER**
(b. 1932)

- 1 - smiles
- 2 - generosity
- 3 - dreams

Poems (1979) by **ERIK LAUER**
(b. 1967)

Moments Musicaux, D. 780 **FRANZ SCHUBERT**
(1797 - 1828)

- No. 3 in F Minor
- No. 5 in F Minor

Impromptu in Bb Major, D. 935, No. 3

Elizabeth Lauer

* i n t e r m i s s i o n *

16 Variations on a **JOHANNES BRAHMS**
Theme by R. Schumann (1833 - 1897)
in F# Minor, Op. 9

Margaret Mills

La Valse **MAURICE RAVEL**
(1875 - 1937)

Notes on the program

by the performers

FRANCIS POULENC gave the following instruction to those who are about to embark on the pages of his Élégie: "This piece should be played as if you were improvising it, a cigar in your mouth and a glass of cognac on the piano."

CLAUDE DEBUSSY composed En blanc et noir near the end of his life, in 1915, which is, in fact, the closing year of his catalogued oeuvre. This work, so full of musical and double-pianistic invention, is very much in and of the young 20th century. Each keyboard is independent, and there is none of the *pro forma* note-for-note echoing to be heard. The suite is full of quicksilver shifts in timbre, mood and materials. The first and third parts are dedicated

to friends, and are replete with pith and wit on one hand, and lushness on the other. At the core of the work is an outpouring - often veiled, sometimes explicit - of the composer's thoughts on and reactions to war in general, and the loss of a friend in particular. Whatever the agenda, however, it is clear that Debussy always gave his first allegiance to the musical values.

In addition to the specific dedications, each of the sections is preceded by text, as follows:

I: Qui reste à sa place He who stays at
home
Et ne danse pas And does not dance
De quelque disgrâce Quietly confesses
Fait l'aveu tout bas. To a certain dis-
grace.

(J. Barbier & M. Carré: "Romeo et Juliette")

II: Prince, porté soit des serfs Eolus
En la forest ou domine Glaucus.
Ou privé soit de paix et d'espérance
Car digne n'est de posséder vertus
Qui mal voudroit au royaume de France.

Prince, be carried by the servants of
Eolus.
In the forest where Glaucus rules.
Or be bereft of peace and hope,
For those are unworthy of virtues
Who would wish ill to the kingdom of
France.

(François Villon: "Ballade contre les ennemis de
la France" - [envoi])

III: Yver, vous n'este qu'un vilain....
Winter, you are nothing but a rascal.

(Charles d'Orléans)

ELIZABETH LAUER was inspired to compose these piano pieces after she came across a group of six haiku that her son, Erik, wrote when he was 12. The music does not specifically illustrate or mirror the words, and in fact, each could exist on its own - but perhaps, not so well as they do together.

FRANZ SCHUBERT used the term "musical moment" for the six short piano works catalogued as D. 780. The two on this program are in the key of F minor, and each has a charming close in F major. The perfection of Schubert's musicianship is countered by the composer's imperfect knowledge of French; his title for the set was Moments Musicaux (rather than the correct "Musicaux").

The Bb Major Impromptu is one of eight works to which Schubert gave this designation. The piece is actually a theme (the composer borrowed it from his score for Rosamunde) and five variations, which cover a wide range of musical expressivity. Like so many of his works, this one inhabits that singular Schubertian world, which runs from bliss to melancholy and back.

JOHANNES BRAHMS used one of Robert Schumann's Bunte Blätter (Op. 99) for his theme, and composed this set of sixteen variations as a kind of tribute to the older composer, who was at the time ill and confined to an asylum at Endenich. The quietly lyrical theme is presented throughout in a poetic and beautiful way, the variations either illuminating its sense or adding unexpected interest to it.

MAURICE RAVEL originally composed his justly famous La Valse for two pianos, in order to present it to Diaghilev as a possible score for choreography. The verdict from the not-always prescient impresario was "no." The composer's

description of the piece is "a sort of apotheosis of the Viennese waltz which I saw combined with an impression of a fantastic whirling motion leading to death." The preface to the score presents a kind of *mise en scène*: "Drifting clouds give glimpses - through rifts - of couples waltzing. Gradually the clouds disperse, revealing an immense crowded hall. The scene slowly becomes illuminated. The light of chandeliers bursts forth. An imperial court, about 1855." It has been suggested that Ravel meant the overwhelming final pages of the piece to evoke the catastrophic end, after the First World War, of the world that was nineteenth-century imperial Vienna.

About the performers

Since her debut recital at Carnegie Recital Hall in 1974, **MARGARET MILLS** has presented solo recitals at Alice Tully Hall and Merkin Concert Hall in New York City, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. She made her London debut in Wigmore Hall in 1981, the first of several European tours in the 1980s and 1990s. Ms. Mills has also appeared as soloist with the Boston Pops, Fort Myers Symphony, Schenectady Symphony, and the Fairfield Orchestra. She has been a featured pianist with the renowned Fine Arts, Manhattan, Laurentian and Cassatt String Quartets. She is heard frequently on WNYC and WQXR radio in New York City. Recently released on the Cambria label is a solo CD recording of the music of Ruth Schonthal and Lowell Liebermann. Other recording credits include performances of contemporary chamber music and solo piano works on the Newport Classic and Contemporary Record Society labels.

Awarded the Frances Walker Piano Prize from Vassar College upon her graduation, Ms. Mills then pursued her studies in piano in Freiburg, Germany. When she returned to the United States, she received her masters degree in music from the New England Conservatory of Music. She is currently Chairperson of the Piano Department at the Third Street School Settlement in New York City. She maintains a busy performing schedule, both on land and

(this summer) sea; her lecture-demonstration on women composers is one that is frequently in demand.

ELIZABETH LAUER is a from-childhood composer who began her formal training at Bennington College (B.A. 1953), where she was a student of Lionel Nowak. She went on to work with Otto Luening at Columbia University (M.A. 1955) and, the recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship, with Philipp Jarnach, Director of the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Hamburg, Germany. Her music, which is published (Carl Fischer, Kjos, Arsis Press) and recorded (Capstone, I Virtuosi, Newport Classics labels), has had countless performances in this country and abroad. She has concentrated in the areas of chamber and vocal music; she also has to her credit music for theatre and dance, an opera, plus works for orchestra. Her most recent effort is a work for the Sarajevo Philharmonic Orchestra, which had its premiere there early in January; a second performance is scheduled for the spring, also in Sarajevo, and the piece is to be included on a CD featuring the Sarajevo Orchestra.

Mrs. Lauer's activities as pianist comprise solo work (including fifteen recitals at Lincoln Center), chamber music and orchestral playing. At Bennington, she was a piano student of both Lionel Nowak and Claude Frank. Years later, she resumed studying, this time with Julian DeGray. She can be heard as composer/pianist on the I Virtuosi CD release, Five Flower Rags. She has been an active teacher at the keyboard, most recently at the University of Bridgeport (CT), where she also taught a variety of subjects, including music theory, music and computers, harmony and ear training. Other teaching activities include a host of lectures, both individual and in series, on a variety of topics, from Beethoven symphonies to Arnold Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire. As a prime feature of their "Art and Music" series, Reading and O'Reilly has released, in video, her presentation on Edward MacDowell. Her other activities include music criticism, program annotating and judging. In the last-named capacity, she has served as an adjudicator for the Mintekko project. Elizabeth Lauer is a member of the American Composers Alliance, the American Composers Forum, and Connecticut Composers, Inc.; she is an honorary member of S.A.I.