

BRAVE NEW WORLDS: FIN DE SIÈCLE AND MODERNISM

THURSDAY 20 JUNE 2024 3PM
THE GOOD SHEPHERD CHAPEL, ABBOTSFORD

	Duration
André CAPLET <i>Suite Persane</i> (1901)	17'
i. <i>Sharki (Allegro quasi andante)</i>	
ii. <i>Mihawend (Andantino)</i>	
iii. <i>Iskia Samaisi (Vivo)</i>	
Germaine TAILLEFERRE <i>Pastorale</i> (1942)	3'
Germaine TAILLEFERRE <i>Forlane</i> (1972)	3'
Erik SATIE <i>Parade</i> (1916-17)	16'
<i>Interval</i>	20'
Igor STRAVINSKY <i>Le Sacre du Printemps</i> , arr. piano duet (1913)	38'

Approximate duration: 1 hour 50 minutes including 20 minute interval

The Brave New Worlds Series is generously supported by Arnis & Robin Dzedins

This concert will feature ANAM's Mason and Hamlin Model CC Concert Grand Piano generously donated by Sieglind D'Arcy



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MUSICIANS

Timothy Young (ANAM Head of Piano) director/piano

Carla Blackwood (ANAM Faculty) horn

Emica Taylor (NZ) flute*

Alyse Faith (guest) flute

Maria Zhdanovich (SA) flute*

Oscar Gillespie (VIC) oboe*

Joshua Webster (NZ) oboe

Karen Chen (NSW) clarinet*

Georgia White (VIC) clarinet*

William Hanna (VIC) bassoon*

Kina Lin-Wilmoth (VIC) bassoon*

Tom Allen (VIC) horn

Steven Bryer (QLD) percussion

Jamie Willson (TAS) percussion

Po Goh (VIC) piano*

Francis Atkins (NSW) piano*

Timothy O'Malley (VIC) piano*

Matthew Garvie (NSW) piano*

*denotes musician supported by ANAM Syndicate

ANAM's Resident Faculty, Head of Piano position is generously supported by the Orthwein Foundation

PROGRAM NOTES

Fashionable Deconstruction: Paris and the New at the Turn of the Century

"Enough of clouds, waves, aquariums, water-sprites, and nocturnal scents: what we need is a music of the earth, every-day music... Now I proclaim to you that French music is going to rule the world." —Jean Cocteau, *Le coq et l'arlequin* (1918)

When asked to name the most influential composers, it is likely you'll respond with Germans and Austrians: Bach, Beethoven, Mozart and Schoenberg among them. At the turn of the twentieth century ('fin-de-siècle'), an overwhelming preference for German expressionist styles drove Romantic idiom and audience tastes. French artists would have preferred a different story – *their* story. Through these early years of the twentieth century, Paris was a creative centre, filled with subversive artistry that more than once faced riotous receptions from rowdy, confused audiences. Out of Paris's mixing pot came impressionists, modernists, neo-classicists, cabaret artists, poets, playwrights and fashion impresarios: each eager for collaboration and cross-pollination, each looking to the past and to each other for inspiration to create the new. The *dramatis personae* for this performance naturally extends well beyond the composers, with artist Pablo Picasso, choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky and writer/filmmaker/designer Jean Cocteau among the creatives supporting the genesis of these works.

André Caplet's (1878-1925) *Suite Persane* ('Persian Suite') misses the circles of influence by a little over a decade, an early work in his career commissioned as part of a showcase celebrating this promising young composer. The *Suite* was commissioned by flautist Georges Barrère, a similarly promising young musician who would go on to have a successful career, notably with Edgard Varèse writing *Density 21.5* for him. At a time before the world wars, French intellectuals were enamoured with an optimistic globalism fuelled by the Paris world's fairs (1893, 1900) and Olympics (1900). This enthusiasm for global cultures was nevertheless viewed through colonialist mindsets by Western creatives, who saw non-Western cultures through the tokenistic and curated slices presented in these problematic fairs. Using Persian melodies supposedly from an academic's collection, Caplet created these three popular movements, melding Orientalist aesthetics with Western compositional devices including polyphony and diatonic harmony. From the composer's notes, the first movement is an "erotic nocturne", the second a "misty" love song, and the final describing "dancing fakirs, who fall in weariness... then leap all the more furiously."

Among other things, Jean Cocteau is described as an "aesthetic activist" – no title would be more apt when considering how his works brought the composers of *Les six* together under the banner of his 1918 manifesto *Le coq et l'arlequin*. Fiercely rejecting the Germanic trends of the time, especially that of Richard Wagner, as well as the impressionism of Claude Debussy, *Les six* encouraged each other to free their music from the foreign and create a new French sound. **Germaine Tailleferre** (1892-1983) was the only woman of *Les six*, in which she was joined by Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius

Milhaud and Francis Poulenc. Tailleferre is the least recognised of *Les six* despite her own advocacy, time spent teaching and writing in the USA, and a large catalogue of works across film, stage and chamber settings. Though the works presented today appear later in her catalogue, they both capture the neo-classical style that came out of *Les six's* anti-Romantic exploration.

"The theatre corrupts everything, even a Stravinsky... There is theatrical mysticism in *Le Sacre*. Is not this music which one listens to with one's face in one's hands?"

The above quote is one of many inflammatory statements from Cocteau's *Le coq et l'arlequin*, and five years after the premiere artists had firmly decided what was then wildly modern was now outdated. But at the time **Igor Stravinsky's** (1882-1971) *Le sacre du printemps* ('The Rite of Spring') was received with such overt disgust by the audience that the music could not be heard over their din. It is likely that Vaslav Nijinsky's choreography caused the most offense, devised separately to the music and often at odds with it: Stravinsky later recounted that his aesthetic intentions were ignored by Nijinsky. Today's reduction for piano four hands captures the intense rhythmic drive and adventurous harmonic language that solidified *The Rite* in music history and marked a turning point for Stravinsky's output.

Reading the various accounts of the creation of **Erik Satie's** (1866-1925) *Parade*, the overwhelming takeaway is how unreliable each narrator is of their own story – claiming their contribution was both most important and yet sullied by others involved. Cocteau, instigator and designer, devised a scenario that was dispensed with almost entirely as Satie, Pablo Picasso and choreographer Léonide Massine assembled the production. This was Satie's first orchestral score, Massine's first choreography commission and Picasso's first foray into theatre design, and much like the preceding *Rite of Spring*, caused strong reactions from the audience at the premiere. Boos and hisses were at times drowned out by applause as factions of the audience gave polarised reactions.

Satie indulged in his appearance as enigma, outside of the establishment and over his life more and more assured in his singularity. For a composer regarded by John Cage as "indispensable", Satie was an outsider for much of his compositional life, gaining acclaim from Maurice Ravel and Claude Debussy for his prescient styles, yet quickly losing it with acerbic reviews of his champions' performances. As a student, Satie had little regard for theory and compositional methods, turning to work as a café pianist and cabaret collaborator, clearly influence on the theatricality of *Parade*.

Cocteau's scenario conjures a lucid series of vignettes as the audience traverses the wild parade of the title, conjuring leaping acrobats, bickering managers, Orientalist conceptions of mystical 'Chinamen', and the wide-eyed wonder of a young girl amidst this action. Initially, Cocteau asked Stravinsky to pen the score, and only asked Satie after the Russian declined. Yet Cocteau's recounting of the creative process shows only admiration for Satie, as if he had been composer of choice all along – rejecting the impressionist vogue of the time, instead synthesising a cubist response to Picasso's surreal costumes and casting the din of the parade in adjacent blocks. Adding to the texture is a menagerie of everyday objects, including a typewriter, siren, cap gun and whip (lottery wheels and pitched bottles are also called for in the score), leaving little of this festival atmosphere to the audience's imaginations.

Written by Alex Owens, ANAM Music Librarian, Robert Salzer Foundation Library

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