AESTHETICS OF NEOCLASSICISM AND POPULISM IN CHAMBER WORKS FOR WOODWINDS BY CHARLES KOECHLIN AND FRANCIS POULENC, 1918-1939

BY

SARA HAILEY MCCALLUM

DISSERTATION
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in Music with a concentration in Performance and Literature in the Graduate College of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2017

Urbana, Illinois

Doctoral Committee:
Associate Professor Timothy McGovern, Chair
Professor William Kinderman, Director of Research
Professor Sever Tipei
Associate Professor J. David Harris
ABSTRACT

The interwar period in France was a time of turmoil and discovery. The end of World War I began a politicizing of the culture that extended to the farthest reaches of the arts. The question of what is authentically French became an all-encompassing obsession for intellectuals as well as those whose aims were purely political. During this period, chamber music in France began to flourish. Charles Koechlin and Francis Poulenc are two examples of French composers whose music of the interwar years is in direct reply to the question of what is authentically French. Presented in this document are six pieces of chamber music for woodwinds written between 1918 and 1939 by Charles Koechlin and Francis Poulenc. Through analysis, discussion of the political climate and the influence of popular music, a clearer picture of what constitutes authentically French music is brought to light.

The six works presented are Charles Koechlin’s Sonata for Bassoon and Piano, op. 71, Trio, op. 92 and Septuor d’Instruments à Vent, op. 165 and Francis Poulenc’s Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon, op. 32, Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, op. 43 and Sextet for Piano, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon and Horn, op. 100. Charles Koechlin and Francis Poulenc at first seem to have very little in common but upon further investigation, a litany of commonalities appear. The relationship between Koechlin and Poulenc began as teacher-student but soon evolved into a friendship between artistic contemporaries. Within this document the role of culture and politics shapes the lives of Charles Koechlin and Francis Poulenc in very different ways but the goal of creating authentically French music is always at the forefront. It is the author’s hope that by viewing these works through the realm of the politically charged climate of the time, performers and those interested in these works will have a better understanding and respect of the pieces as well as these notable French composers.
To Robert
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank several people for helping in the completion of this document. First, my research advisor, Dr. William Kinderman, thank you for pushing me to be a better researcher, writer and musician. To Professor Timothy McGovern, thank you for your continued support and to Dr. Sever Tipei and Professor David Harris, thank you for your patience and time.

To my parents Chris and Janet McCallum, thank you for always supporting and encouraging me to be a better musician. Without your love and support I would not have finished this degree. I love you and am proud to be your daughter. To Jim and Debby Addams, thank you for your unwavering confidence in me, it helped more than you will know. To my sisters Anna Tyson and Katie McCallum, thank you for always being there for me. Lastly, to Robert Addams, my rock, my best friend and the love of my life. Thank you for supporting me, taking care of me and keeping me grounded as I worked towards this monumental moment in my life. I love you more than words can express.
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.......................................................................................................................... 1

CHAPTER TWO: CHARLES KOECHLIN.................................................................................................................. 10
  Charles Koechlin and the *Fédération Musicale Populaire*............................................................................. 12
  Sonata for Bassoon and Piano, op. 71.................................................................................................................... 17
  Trio, op. 92............................................................................................................................................................ 28
  *Septour d’Instruments à Vent*, op. 165.............................................................................................................. 38

CHAPTER THREE: FRANCIS POULENC............................................................................................................. 54
  Poulenc’s association with Koechlin.................................................................................................................... 61
  Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon, op. 32.............................................................................................................. 63
  Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, op. 43............................................................................................................ 75
  Sextet for Piano, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon and Horn, op. 100................................................................. 98

CHAPTER FOUR: AFTERWARD.......................................................................................................................... 117

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY............................................................................................................................. 123
Chapter One: Introduction

The interwar chamber music of the two Parisian composers Charles Koechlin and Francis Poulenc is an underestimated and in part still undiscovered jewel in the treasure chest of French woodwind chamber music of the 20th century. While many of Poulenc’s works are often performed, Koechlin’s works from this time have been seriously neglected. The focus of this study is the chamber music for winds by Koechlin and Poulenc composed during the interwar period between 1918 and 1939. This document also explores the mutual interaction and influence of these two composers on one another, starting as a teacher-student relationship and evolving into one of independent artistic contemporaries. Also considered in this document is how the politicization of French culture conditioned the aesthetic climate of music in France during this time. The pieces to be considered through analysis and discussion are Koechlin’s Sonata for Bassoon and Piano, op. 71, Trio, op. 92 and Septuor d’Instruments à Vent as well as Poulenc’s Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon, op. 32, Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, op. 43 and Sextet for Piano, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon and Horn, op.100.

Before delving into the music of Koechlin and Poulenc, a brief indication of the political climate in France shortly before the turn of the century is appropriate. During this period a single incident exerted surprising impact on the cultural climate related to music in France. The question of nationalism, of what qualified as French music, was involved. While some composers were looking to the past for inspiration, many others were determined as they saw it to bring music back to the French people. Yet as we will see these two tendencies were compatible.

France before and during the turn of the century was fractured, with unease within the government as well as the people of France. St-Aubin states succinctly that “…the Dreyfus
Affair of 1894 was to become a rallying point for two opposing camps: the *dreyfusards* (intellectuals, socialists, radicals, antimilitary moderate republicans under *la Ligue des droits de l’homme*) and the *anti-dreyfusards* (the anti-Semitic, religious nationalist right under *la Ligue de la Partie française*).”

In 1894, Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish Captain of Alsatian origin and a member of the French army, was convicted of selling French military secrets to the Germans and sentenced to life in prison at Devil’s Island. By 1896, Colonel Picquart had provided evidence that pointed instead to Major Esterhazy as the culprit. Esterhazy was later tried and then acquitted by French army authorities. After Esterhazy’s acquittal, Alfred Dreyfus’s brother, Mathieu Dreyfus, contacted Emile Zola, a popular novelist of the time with strong interests in Republican politics, with regard to his brother’s circumstances. By 1898 Zola had published an open letter to the president of the Republic with a list of charges all beginning with the phrase “J’accuse” (I accuse). After this letter, later referred to as “J’accuse,” was published, Zola was indicted for libel. He was tried and convicted but then fled to England. Through the media press surrounding the Zola trial, the facts of the Dreyfus affair were brought back to the public, some of whom were outraged. In 1899 Dreyfus was retried, convicted and given an additional 10-year punishment before finally being pardoned by the president and then exonerated in 1906.

The significance of the Dreyfus Affair for aesthetic currents in France has been insightfully explored in writings of Jane Fulcher. The Dreyfus Affair raised two main questions for the people of France: “Did ‘tradition’ and the rights of the state take precedence over those of

---

the individual? And did those of the army outweigh civil authority even if found in error?”

Through these questions and many others, two main conceptions of French authorities came to fruition; the first being the authority of the army, church and nation being supreme and the second that the judicial and equalitarian ideals of the French Revolution should be upheld. Even after Alfred Dreyfus was pardoned, the French Nationalist groups continued to fight but especially through two separate groups, *Ligue de la Partie Française* and *Action Française*. Leslie Derfler summarizes the impact of the Dreyfus Affair quite succinctly, “If the Dreyfus Affair is best understood as a product of the times in which it took place—the France of the 1890’s and the social, cultural, and economic forces that confronted each other—it is also true that it pitted two attitudes, two moralities.”

Both of the leagues were created by elite intellectuals with goals to destabilize the government with no political parties but also strictly limited political aims. They embraced anti-Semitism and advocated “direct action [and] mobilization of the masses.” As Fulcher observes, “most significant here is that both now turned to the domain of culture in order legally to prolong the war over contestatory conceptions of essential French values.” With this turn to culture, the role of politicizing French music began to play a major role in aftermath of the Dreyfus affair. Both of the leagues had one main advocate for the arts who wrote on behalf of its league, for the *Partie Française*, Maurice Barrés and for the *Action Française*, Charles Maurras. For both of these advocates their writing stressed that, “politics and art were to be imbued with the same

---

3 Fulcher, Jane F. *French Cultural Politics & Music: from the Dreyfus Affair to the First World War*, p. 4.
5 Fulcher, Jane F. *French Cultural Politics & Music*, p. 5.
6 Ibid., p. 5.
‘national spirit’ from which each was originally born, and which inherently endowed them with an identical nature.” The aforementioned elite and intellectual advocates felt that a revolution in culture (or the arts) was essential and both parties were responsible for further politicizing art in France.

The Ligue was founded in December of 1898 as a nationalist movement against Dreyfus and the press that supported him. The Ligue was dissolved by 1909. Two members of the Ligue left to form a separate nationalist movement, Action Française. Maurice Pujo and Henri Vaugeois founded Action Française in June of 1899 and shortly thereafter Charles Maurras joined becoming the ideological voice of Action Française.

The Action Française focused their debate on culture, using music and other forms of art as propaganda. Action Française held 17th century France as its model for culture in society, a turn back to what was considered classicism and truly French. They were anti-Dreyfus, anti-romantic, anti-German, anti-Wagner and anti-Semitic. Both the Action Française and its forerunner, Ligue de la Partie Française, were comprised of men considered elite intellectuals in support of integralism and Catholicism. Action Française’s members were considered monarchist, counter-revolutionary and anti-democratic. For the members of Action Française, so-called authentic French traditions and values were paramount. Action Française is still active today and is the most structured and longest lasting nationalist group in France.

Unlike other art forms in France at the time, music had an institution for professional training at the University/Conservatory level. The Conservatoire National de Musique, which was founded during the French Revolutionary period, controlled music education in France until

---

7 Fulcher, Jane F. French Cultural Politics & Music, p. 5.
the Schola Cantorum was founded in 1894 by Vincent d’Indy (a member of the Partie Française), who served as its director. The Schola Cantorum was opened in 1896 as an alternative to the Conservatoire for students pursuing music as a career. The Schola “defined a special range of musical values that it considered to be national and also a certain ‘code’ that was associated with genres, styles repertoire and technique.” The Schola and its founders were intent on producing “music [that] manifested nationalist values through a potent symbolism that was inherently bivocal – that is, simultaneously resonant in invoking the fields of both French politics and art.”

The elite intellectuals that comprised the two leagues felt that the first place to begin politicizing music was at the conservatoire level. They also felt that the arts would be used as an instrument to voice their opposition towards the Third Republic. The main question posed by both leagues was, “What cultural values are French?” The Dreyfus Affair led to the creation of the Ligues de la Partie Française which in turn led to the formation of the Action Française. With this shift, the focus also changed from being strictly political to more overtly attempting to determine what was “authentic French culture and art.”

Vincent d’Indy was one of the musicians among the group of writers and intellectual elites that formed the League Française. He brought to the Schola Cantorum his French musical discourse along with new terminology, conceptions and values that were politically charged. Through attempting to define what makes French music authentically French, d’Indy and the Schola Cantorum began historical musicological research of French music of the past. The

---

8 Fulcher, Jane F. *French Cultural Politics & Music*, p. 6.
9 Ibid., p. 6.
10 Ibid., p. 6.
11 Ibid., p. 23.
Schola was originally founded in 1894 as a society for the teaching and performing of religious music, especially Gregorian chant. The Schola’s goal was to teach religious music, a gap in the curriculum that had occurred at the Conservatoire, and also to raise public awareness of French religious music of the past. Before this, in 1871, a group of student composers from the Conservatoire (backed by the Republic) formed the Société Nationale de Musique. A concert society “dedicated to the rebirth of a new and more serious French music.”12 Members included Lalo, Franck, Saint-Saëns, Massenet and Bizet.13 The main differences between the Conservatoire and the Schola Cantorum were “over historical conceptions, pedagogical models, musical meaning aesthetics and canon.”14

By 1904 the question of “what works are truly ‘French’?” had become an urgent preoccupation. The Nationalist Right had a very clear idea of what they felt constituted French music and soon after the Republic gave its say on the matter. The main effort was to maintain a clear difference between French and German musical works. The question of “Is the work culturally authentically French?” was one of the major inquiries posed during the early 1900’s along with the “enquete” or survey of French musicians that began in 1902-1903. By 1903, d’Indy, along with the Schola Cantorum had decided that German influence in the music of French composers was acceptable as long as it still imbued a French spirit.

1905 was a pivotal year for the already divided France. The Combes ministry came to an end but not without the December 9, 1905 French law on the separation of the churches and the state. This year also saw the formation of the Section Française de l’Internationale Ouvriere (SFIO), which would later be replaced by the Socialist Party in 1969. The SFIO was formed as

12 Fulcher, Jane F. French Cultural Politics & Music, p. 23.
13 Ibid., p. 23.
14 Ibid., p. 25.
the party of the workers movement. The SFIO was pro-working class, anti-nationalist and pro-Dreyfus. They stressed education for all and believed that classical music should be accessible by all people, not just the elite.

At this moment in French history the line between political and non-political music started to blur. Professional composers were taking sides and composing in both idioms. On all sides, “the political musical and professional musical cultures were beginning to fuse.” From 1905-1914, the “Guerre des Chapelles” or war between compositional camps was burgeoning. The aftermath of the Dreyfus Affair continued even after Dreyfus was exonerated in 1906. The Schola versus Conservatoire battle advanced with “…all factions arguing in the name of “true” French tradition, while maintaining different political and cultural conceptions of it.” D’Indy continued to fight on the side of the Schola while Claude Debussy became the newest model of the Conservatoire’s image of true French music. The debate over Debussy began with each chapelle ‘s “advocacy of certain values with their associated styles and forms, as well as with specific historical canons or models.”

Within this battle Debussy became the main figure, with the factions either for or against. Emile Vuillermoz compared the debate over Debussy to the Dreyfus affair in an article published in Mercure Musical. “One day treatises on ancient history might teach that a chief of military music, named Achille Dreyfussy, was accused of high treason by an expert in harmony who studied his writing closely.” “Dreyfussy” is of course a witty blending of Dreyfus and Debussy, capitalizing on the shared letters in their names. The rich ambivalence of the age is

15 Fulcher, Jane F. French Cultural Politics & Music, p. 130.
16 Ibid., p. 153.
17 Ibid., p. 154.
18 Ibid., p. 154.
19 Ibid., p.155.
embedded in Debussy’s art and especially its relation to Wagner. Debussy was both deeply influenced by Wagner and also responded to that influence with distancing irony. The cultural tension that ignited such strong debates may be regarded as reaching one culmination on May 29, 1913 at the riot ensuing at the premiere of Stravinsky’s La Sacre du Printemps.

Through the outcome of the Dreyfus Affair and the complex heightening of tensions up to the outbreak of World War I in 1914, musical art in France became more and more politicized. The opening of the Schola Cantorum and its nationalistic view of music education continued the politicization of music. Under the guidance of D’Indy, research into French music of the past made progress, while composers began to question French music of the present and the future. The role of Nationalism in the works of Koechlin and Poulenc explored in the present thesis will consider this background, while also exploring harmonic and theoretical analysis of the pieces. Within this analysis the term neoclassical will be applied to specific techniques employed by both composers. Scott Messing’s description of the French appropriation of the term neoclassical is aptly stated, “Living in a European milieu which cast its most beloved moments in a Germanic lattice, and in which political tensions and nationalist insecurities tended to skew attitudes toward culture, French musicians were keen to devise a terminology that might buttress their notions of artistic parity (at first) and (later) of superiority.”

At first glance, Charles Koechlin and Francis Poulenc might seem to have not so much in common. Koechlin was 32 years older, and a seasoned figure while Poulenc was still young. Today though, Poulenc’s works are more often performed and studied. The relationship between

---

these two men began as a teacher-pupil connection but soon evolved to mutual admiration and professional respect. Though Koechlin and Poulenc ultimately ended up on different life paths, their desire to create music accessible by the masses connects them in ways not at first evident.

In the context of this discussion Koechlin and Poulenc show us two examples of the political impact on music in France during the interwar years. Koechlin was overtly political while Poulenc sometimes served as a cultural pawn amid political currents of the time. The six works to be discussed are engrossing examples of French music for woodwinds. How they fit into the setting and context will be revealed in the proceeding chapters.
Chapter Two: Charles Koechlin

Charles Koechlin was born November 27, 1867 in Paris, France to a “…a wealthy Alsatian family, one with a long philanthropic tradition and utopian socialist tendencies.”

21 Alsace is a border region between France and Germany (but today belongs to France) where both languages are spoken. It was from these ancestors that Koechlin inherited what he called his “Alsatian temperament: an energy, naivety and an absolute simple sincerity that lie at the heart of his music and character.”

22 His father, Jules Koechlin, was a textile designer with aspirations that his son would become an artillery officer.

23 In October of 1887 Koechlin entered the École Polytechnique and during his studies continued his, as Elise Kirk describes, “…obsession with music. He performed often with comrades and attempted orchestral transcriptions.” In 1889 he contracted tuberculosis and was not allowed to enter the military as planned. While convalescing in Algeria he began to seriously study music again: “…when he returned to Paris in 1890, he felt his sickness had been “providentielle,” freeing him for the career as a composer that he had always wanted.”

24 Koechlin enrolled in the Paris Conservatoire in 1890, at the age of 23, after taking counterpoint lessons with French composer Charles Lefebvre. During his time at the Paris Conservatoire Koechlin studied with several influential teachers. From 1891-1895 Koechlin attended composition classes with Massenet. Already as a child, Koechlin favored Massanet’s

---

24 Ibid., p. 6.
Nuit d’Espagne with “…it’s key of F-sharp and B-minor never ceas[ing] to hold for him a certain charm.” Harmony lessons were taught by Antoine Taudou the “first master to open up new horizons and add flexibility to Koechlin’s style.” Counterpoint and fugue lessons were in 1892 with André Gedalge. Louis Bourgault-Ducoudray, “Professor of music history, guided the young composer’s growing interest in modality and folk music.” At the end of 1896, after Massenet’s resignation, Gabriel Fauré began teaching composition and “Koechlin entered the classes of this new master who was to influence him more than any other.” Under Fauré’s tutelage, Koechlin began to gain confidence as a composer.

In 1909 with Fauré’s support, Koechlin founded the Société Musicale Indépendante along with Maurice Ravel, Florent Schmitt, Jean Huré, Louis Laloy and Emile Vuillermoz. Claude Debussy avoided the Société, stating that he did not like the “tone of the société.” Fauré, whose “use of modes instead of tonic-dominant tonality began the French sound of the late 1800-early 1990’s,” served as the Société’s first president. The purpose of this society was to promote new music, which was directly in opposition to d’Indy’s Société Nationale and the Schola Cantorum.

Though Debussy was not interested in participating in the Société, this did not dampen the members’ adoration of him. The SMI’s main objective was to promote new French music, not the music of the past but rather the present. Jean Huré, in his book Dogmes Musicaux outlines what he and perhaps his fellow SMI members ideals of what constitutes French music. There is

---

26 Ibid., p. 6.
27 Ibid., p. 7.
28 Ibid., p. 9.
accordingly an emphasis on major, minor and church or oriental modes, chords with more than 4 or 5 notes, contrapuntal writing but not in the style of Palestrina or Bach but rather Franck, “neither absolute diatonicism nor [the] chromaticism of Wagner.”31 Huré further posits that music continues to move forward because the human ear evolves and wants to hear more. In alignment with Koechlin’s own ideals, Huré also state that music should be broadly accessible, being “socially conservative while maintaining the importance of personal freedom.”32

From 1912-1913 Koechlin worked on orchestrating Debussy’s “Khamma” (excluding the prelude) at the request of the composer. As Jane Fulcher writes, “…he [Koechlin], like his Debussyte colleagues, argued that the authentic French tradition is essentially one of freedom, of continual renewal and invention.”33 In 1918, Eric Satie invited him to join a group of elite composers called “Les Nouveaux Juenes” (the new young people) along with Roussel, Milhaud and several others. This group never came to fruition but was the predecessor to another of Satie’s groups that was later coined “Les Six” in 1920. During World War I, “Koechlin began to teach and give a series of lectures on modern music that were bold in context.”34 By 1923, Koechlin began to gain more fame as a theorist than as a composer.

**Charles Koechlin and the Fédération Musicale Populaire**

The fascist riot on February 6, 1934 at the Place de la Concorde was one of the most violent confrontations on the Parisian streets to date. The tragedy and the events following led to the eventual formation of the Fédération Musicale Populaire (FMP), for which Koechlin served as president starting in 1937. The years of 1932-1937 were a “…period of growing

---

32 Ibid., p. 163.
33 Ibid., p. 157.
34 Ibid., p. 215.
unemployment and political insecurity, many musicians, apprehensive about the spread of fascism at home and abroad, gave voice to their concerns by supporting left wing social and cultural policies."

The February 1934 crisis led to “many artists, musicians and intellectuals join[ing] the French left in advocating widespread national solidarity to counter right-wing extremism.” The Parti Communiste Français (PCF) was formed after the crisis and on July 14, 1935 the French Front Populaire (Popular Front) was formed. The Popular Front was based on “anti-fascist sentiment and pro-worker solidarity.” In May of 1936 the Popular Front won in the general election. With the Popular Front in control of the government, a push for politicized culture began. Several “pro-soviet cultural organizations” were formed including the Association des Écrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires (AEAR) and the Maison de la Culture.

“Koechlin, while not affiliated to the Party, often expressed his sympathy for the Communists.” He did this most publicly through his column on music in the Communist publication _L’humanité_. He was elected president of the Fédération Musicale Populaire (FMP) in 1937 after the death of Albert Roussel. The FMP was formed on June 2, 1935 by four members of a small music section of the Association des Ecrivains et des Artistes Revolutionnaires (AEAR). Charles Koechlin was one of the four founding members. “Although a man of the Left, Koechlin had clearly imbibed the French postwar orthodoxy that the classic was related to

---

36 Ibid., p.474.
37 Ibid., p. 475.
38 Ibid., p. 475.
simplicity, clarity and balance- a balance here appropriated by the Popular Front."  

The main goal of the FMP was to bring French classical music of the time closer to the people. This included music composed by members of the FMP as well as music deemed worthy by the organization’s members.

The FMP hoped to achieve this goal through two objectives. The first was, “to consolidate and centralize the activities of the different musical organizations that sought to promote the development of musical culture among the French working-class population.”

The second objective was to “toss the vulgar, degrading music, which the bourgeoisie imposes on people, off its throne.” This vulgar music was anything that could be heard on the radio or that was considered popular music of the time such as dance music or chansons. Within these two objectives was an “overarching goal: ‘to fight against fascism, to fight for a new form of culture.’”

The FMP was comprised of “five wind bands, four choirs, and around ten individual memberships” when it was first started but then grew to “include 1220 members: twenty-four wind bands, fifteen choirs, and 102 independent individuals.” The group consisted of several young composers (born around 1900) but also attracted older composers like Koechlin as well. The group’s aim was to “make music more accessible to the people, particularly the middle

---

42 Ibid., p. 91.
43 Ibid., p. 92.
class.””⁴⁵ To achieve this goal concerts were presented to the public. “Koechlin not only believed that “ideas” could and should be expressed in music, but that they could effectively be communicated in an uncompromising language that might still reach the masses.”⁴⁶

Educating the French middle class in music was also of importance to Koechlin, “he believed that musical literacy should be taught at school and that music history should be included in general historical instruction.”⁴⁷ He wanted to bring music back to the middle class but also felt that “musical culture could not be optimally developed without a reorganization of society that allowed workers a greater amount of leisure time.”⁴⁸ In other words, workers needed to be educated about music but also needed to have time off of work to participate in and attend musical events. He also encouraged amateur groups to perform works of modern French composers. Lastly, he strongly promoted works to be composed for the wind-band repertory, where he felt there was a lack of modern French influence.⁴⁹

In June of 1934 Koechlin was asked by the AEAR “…to write a piece as part of a campaign to free the German revolutionary Thaelmann imprisoned by the Nazis.”⁵⁰ The result was Koechlin’s Libérons Thaelmann, Op. 138. This seven-verse song employs some compositional techniques that are also present in Koechlin’s non-political works. As seen in the example below, a strong distinctive rhythmic language of duple versus triple is used along with a modal key center. In the music example, note how the emphatic crescendo underscores the

---

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp.104-105.
⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 104.
⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 106.
demand for liberation of Thaelmann, whose name is delivered as full-voiced Eb chords are heard, with the voices placed in a high register and marked fortissimo.

Example 2.1, Charles Koechlin, Libérons Thaelmann, Op. 138, mm. 10-19

Koechlin wanted to write inclusive music for the people of France, not just the high society but also rather the working class. He felt that the working middle class needed to not only have leisure time to enjoy creating and listening to music but also to be better educated in music theory and history. Through the FMP, he was able to pursue and ultimately put into action these goals. At the same time, as we shall see, Koechlin’s commitment to “uncompromising language” led him to draw on the past musical tradition for inspiration, as is shown by the neoclassical aspects characteristic of his musical works.

Sonata for Bassoon and Piano, op. 71

Koechlin began writing his Sonata for Bassoon and Piano in 1918 while also working on his Sonata for Horn. Robert Orledge describes the bassoon sonata as the “most attractive and accessible of all” of Koechlin’s instrumental sonatas. Qualities that make Sonata Op. 71 accessible are “…a Romanticism characterized by horn calls and by flowing arpeggios suggestive of Chopin or Fauré.” Koechlin’s sketches reveal that the Bassoon Sonata was first a four-movement work rather than the final three movements. The original second movement scherzo later became the finale in a final revision of the piece in July of 1919. The central slow second movement (Nocturne) of the final version was originally the third movement. The only movement that remained the same from first to final drafts was the first ‘Andante Moderato’ movement.

The fourth movement in the original sketches later became the last movement of the Silhouettes de Comedie, op. 193 for solo bassoon and orchestra, a 12-movement work with each movement based on characters of Italian commedia dell’arte. The work was composed from 1942-1943. The 12th and last movement, Monsieur Prud’homme au bal des humorists, is based on the original fourth movement of the Sonata. The movement involves one rhythmic cell consisting of two quarter notes followed by a dotted eighth note bared to a sixteenth that is then followed by four eighth notes. This one measure cell is then repeated throughout the range of the bassoon, beginning in the extreme low register. The bassoon solo continues with the rhythmic cell and is joined by different members of the orchestra one section at a time. When one section

---

52 Orledge, Robert. *Charles Koechlin - His Life and Works*, p. 120.
drops out a different section joins. The bassoon solo repeats the rhythmic cell, sounding in changing registers. The entire movement is comedic, rhythmic and modal.

The original fourth movement displays a highly comical character and with the removal Koechlin endowed the Sonata with a more cohesive mood. Consequently, as Robert Orledge writes, “the comic character was composed out of the Sonata.”\(^{55}\) The final July 1919 version also provides a better tonal balance with the movements moving a third apart from each other, conveying a Fauréan feel with the transitions from minor to major.\(^{56}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>August 1918 version</th>
<th>July 1919 version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. D minor to B Major</td>
<td>1. D minor to B Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Scherzo: B minor to B Major</td>
<td>2. Nocturne: E-flat major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ‘Prud’homme’ finale: C major</td>
<td>(becomes op. 193 no. 12)(^{57})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Sonata for Bassoon and Piano was first premiered on February 25, 1938 at the Salle Cortot de l'École Normale de Musique de Paris, performed by M. Dhérin on bassoon and M. Jules Guieyse on piano. The first edition of the piece was transcribed from Koechlin’s own manuscript found in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. In January of 1942 Koechlin completed a transcription of the Sonata op. 71 for French Horn. This transcription was at the

---


\(^{56}\) Ibid., p. 119.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., p. 119.
request of horn player Georges Caprael. The Sonata for Horn is essentially identical to the original op. 71 for bassoon, with a few octave adjustments, changes which were needed to better suit the range of the horn.  

The Sonata opens with the bassoon presenting the first theme of the piece without piano (Ex. 2.1). The theme is quite simple and charming, employing all the notes of the octatonic scale while harmonically rooted in d minor. Elise Kirk writes that “frequently within this work, Koechlin seems to be considering the bassoon as a romantic instrument associating its deeper tones with the poetry of nightfall…” The piano enters in the second bar with a d minor arpeggio (with added B flats) solidifying the tonic of the first theme continuing until bar 12. The soaring melody of the bassoon, accompanied by the flowing arpeggios in the piano, create a sense of tranquility that will return in the second movement.

![Example 2.1, Sonata for Bassoon and Piano, op. 71, mvt. 1, ms. 1-2](image)

Throughout the first A section the bassoon carries the melody while the piano accompanies with broken arpeggios shifting through several key centers. The B section begins at measure 12, marked *Allegretto scherzando* with the piano presenting the main theme of the B section in A Lydian. The bassoon enters in bar 15 stating the B theme in D flat Lydian while the piano

---


returns to A Lydian in bar 18. Throughout the B section the piano and bassoon are paired against each other in a quasi-fugal manner. The presto section brings an instant contrast to the A section, with the secco melody found in both the piano and bassoon creating a playful mood. The interplay between the two voices allows the piano to step out of the accompaniment role. There are also uses of sudden halts and silence to create tension that is not found in the A section.

In measure 33, the bassoon returns to the A theme while the piano accompanies with a hybrid of both the A section arpeggios and the B section modal theme. It is as if the bassoon has returned to the A theme but the piano is not quite finished with what can be offered from the B section music. Rather than giving in to the A theme, the piano continues alongside the bassoon until the two melodies end together in peaceful serenity. In measure 41 the piano is instructed to play the B theme \textit{staccato leggero} against the legato melody of the bassoon causing the arpeggios and the B theme to be very clear and crisp compared to the A theme. The first movement slowly evaporates into silence on a B major arpeggio in the piano.

The form of the first movement is ternary but with one exception. The second A section is juxtaposed with music of the B section. The A section music is heard in the bassoon against the B section music in the piano. Koechlin has taken a standard ternary form and added his own twist, a theme through out his music.

\textbf{Formal Overview of Movement One}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>measures</td>
<td>1-11</td>
<td>12-32</td>
<td>33-end</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second movement is entitled Nocturne and is written in 6-4 ½ time with the rhythm to be felt in 5-4 + 3-8. The piano begins with a repeated ostinato bass line, (Ex. 2.2) which according to Robert Orledge creates a “Chopinesque element.”

Robert Orledge suggests that the ostinato figure Koechlin wrote was based on the ostinato figures used in Chopin’s Nocturne in E minor, op. 72, no.1 (Ex. 2.3) as well as the Barcarolle, op. 60 (Ex. 2.4). Chopin indeed was an important early musical influence on Koechlin. In 1879 Koechlin listened to the recitals of Charles-Wilfred Bériot performing piano works by Chopin. This performance inspired a young Koechlin to begin piano studies with the hope of playing Chopin himself. Koechlin often looked to composers of the past for inspiration and there is no doubt that Chopin’s Eb Nocturne helped to inspire Koechlin’s Nocturne from the Sonata for Bassoon and Piano.

By using these two figures as a template for his own ostinato Koechlin responds to both of the Chopin ostinato and forms a hybrid version of the two motives. He does take a 12-note arpeggio pattern but adds an additional note creating an irregular 13-note pattern, thus requiring the time signature of 6-4 ½. (Ex. 2.5) It does seem more than just a coincidence that the title of Koechlin’s second movement is the same as one of the Chopin examples, Nocturne, but adding the additional note to the 12-note Chopin pattern puts a decisively Koechlin twist on the regular Chopin ostinato pattern. “The central ‘Nocturne’ is perhaps the most distinctive movement, with

---

60 Orledge, Robert. Charles Koechlin - His Life and Works, p. 119.
61 Ibid., p. 4.
mysterious bitonal passages, à la Milhaud, and a one-bar ostinato figure which recalls Chopin’s *Barcarolle.*"^{62}

Example 2.3, Chopin, Nocturne in E Minor, op. 72, no. 1, ms. 1-2

Example 2.4, Chopin, Barcarolle, op. 60, mm. 4-5

Example 2.5, Koechlin, Sonata for Bassoon and Piano, op. 71, mvt.2, mm. 1-3

Copyright © 1990 by Gérard Billaudot Editeur, Paris

After one bar of the irregular ostinato pattern the bassoon enters with the melody of the second movement (Ex. 2.6). The time signature as well as the irregular ostinato displace where the downbeat would normally be felt creating a feeling of unease rhythmically against the tranquil quality of the melody in the bassoon.

Example 2.6, Sonata for Bassoon and Piano, op. 71, mvt. 2, mm. 1-4 in bassoon

Copyright © 1990 by Gérard Billaudot Editeur, Paris

---

The piano continues to repeat the ostinato with the addition of major triads rising by step in measure seven, creating a texture reminiscent of Debussy. The bassoon takes over the ostinato pattern in bar 14 with the melody in the piano in bar 15, in an example of voice exchange. One of the many contrapuntal techniques Koechlin employs throughout the Sonata op. 71. The piano continues with the melody in bar 16 with a Chopinesque treatment. This exchange continues until bar 20 where the two parts reverse, leaving the melody in the bassoon and the ostinato pattern now an octave higher in the piano.

The Debussy-like major chordal progression returns in bar 23, in the right hand of the piano, juxtaposing shifting key centers over the E-flat ostinato pattern found in the left hand. The key centers found in measure 23 are as follows: A-C-D-E-F sharp-A-B-C-C sharp D. Starting in measure 25 beat 3 the shifting key centers are D-E-G-A finally returning to the key of E-flat at measure 26. The use of shifting key centers only increases the tension in the rising melodic line of the bassoon, which reaches its climax in bar 26 marked fortissimo accompanied by two octaves of the ostinato in the piano along with a two-octave pedal E-flat in the left hand. Koechlin’s use of the upper octave of the bassoon register and the thick texture in the piano creates one of the most impressive and impassioned moments of the piece.

All three voices, that of the bassoon, the ostinato and the Debussy-like chords come together. The piano lands on an e flat major triad, in the same key as the ostinato. The bassoon continues its ascent to the climatic C flat marked fortissimo for the first five beats of the measure creating a tension that is finally resolved with a downward half step falling to B flat. Once all three voices have arrived solidly in E flat major the movement moves towards its resolving completion.
From measure 27 to the end, the music seems to unravel and cave in upon itself, as if defeated or exhausted after the arrival at measure 26. The ostinato pattern in the piano moves down an octave from bar 28 to 29 but then in bar 30 is heard up the octave again in E major with the last three eighth notes returning the pattern to the home key of E-flat. Measure 31 continues the release of tension with the ostinato pattern in the piano performed in its dimmuted skeletal form of quarter notes and finally with the movement ending on an E-flat major chord. The form of the Nocturne resembles the first movement in that it is ternary with a second A section that is a combination of the music of both the A and B sections. As in the first movement, the A theme is heard in the bassoon with the B theme in the piano.

Formal Overview of Nocturne

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>measures</td>
<td>1-14</td>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>20-end</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The repeated ostinato pattern mentioned earlier displays similarity to Chopin’s Nocturne, op. 72, no. 1, and the melody of both pieces also bears comparison. Koechlin’s melody, starting in the bassoon deviates from Chopin’s model rhythmically but both melodies begin simply and independent of the ostinato bass line. Both melodies are also rhythmically in duple versus the triple in the ostinato. Koechlin has taken the Chopin model of Nocturne, op. 72, no. 1 and applied his own techniques to create the Nocturne of the Sonata.
This movement is thereby representative of a neoclassical orientation, in that an earlier work by an influential composer—albeit one associated with Romanticism and who resided in Paris—serves as a compositional model. Koechlin’s neoclassicism is rather inclusive in nature, and also embraces the musical legacy of J.S. Bach, a compositional figure who had exerted powerful influence in turn on Chopin, and whose German heritage posed no complications for Koechlin due to the historical distance of two centuries.

The third movement, Final is marked *Allegro – vigorously and harshly rhythmic*. The movement begins with the bassoon stating a recitative-like theme in A major. The piano enters (Ex. 2.8) on an E major chord, while imitating the subject heard in the bassoon, now heard a fifth lower, and with a change in metrical notation to 9/8.
By bar five the appearance of D-sharp creates a tonic center of E major that then shifts to B major in bar 9 and then continues in the circle of fifths to F-sharp major at bar 12. By measure 17 the key has shifted to D-flat major (or C-sharp major enharmonically which further continues the circle of fifths progression) with an emphasis on the dominant, A-flat. Throughout the A section, the melody is passed between the piano and bassoon, unlike in the previous two movements where the piano was the accompaniment in the A section. The bassoon begins a melodic idea that is then finished by the piano. This interplay creates chamber music of subtle distinction and resourcefulness.

The B section begins at measure 22 on the dominant of D-flat with Debussy-like chords in the right hand, a pattern that was already present in the second movement. The bassoon enters in bar 23 and offers a melody that is reminiscent of the second movement but more ominous and darker in tone. In measure 37, the piano sounds a descending G-sharp minor scale (the enharmonic of A-flat), which then becomes an ostinato on the dominant of A-flat minor (E-flat).

The B section continues at bar 41 with the bassoon once again stating the main motivic melody of the section accompanied by a pedal E-flat in the piano. While the bassoon continues a 15-bar descending chromatic line the piano once again moves through several key centers in a rhythmic ostinato pattern. As Elise Kirk writes, “…Koechlin uses the chromatic scale in juxtaposition with other scalar patterns (such as the Aeolian, his favorite minor form) for
splashes of color within a basically diatonic framework." Measure 43 begins in C major moving next to B-flat in bar 47 and then to F-sharp major in bar 48. While these tonal shifts are motivated by the left hand of the piano, the right hand sounds a variation on the main theme beginning in bar 47, which was first heard in the bassoon at the onset of the section. At bar 56 the piano begins a seven octave descending statement of Fs shifting to F-sharp at bar 58 with this f-sharp serving as a bridge to bar 59 where the A theme returns in the bassoon.

Unlike the beginning of the movement, the return of the A section is fragmented with only small motivic cells of the A theme being heard through shifting key centers. Finally at bar 75 the full A theme is restated but in B major rather than B minor. This shift from major to minor is also seen in the first movement and presents an example of what Robert Orledge refers to as the “Fauréan treatment of minor to major.” The coda begins in bar 82, which is often taken faster than the previous music, although this is not indicated in the notated music. The piece concludes with the bassoon on a low b natural and the piano taking up a frenzy of 16th notes, and finishing triumphantly on a B major chord (Ex 2.9).

Example 2.9, Sonata for Bassoon and Piano, op. 71, mvt. 3, mm. 88-89 in full score
Copyright © 1990 by Gérard Billaudot Editeur, Paris

The form of the finale is quite unlike the previous two movements. Koechlin uses an arch form with a short codetta to cap this last and longest movement.

---

Formal Overview of Final Movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>codetta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>measures</td>
<td>1-21</td>
<td>22-40</td>
<td>41-57</td>
<td>58-71</td>
<td>75-81</td>
<td>82-end</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Koechlin’s Sonata for Bassoon and Piano, op. 71 offers an example of an instrumental solo that is also an attractive chamber piece with some neoclassical characteristics. The interplay between the bassoon and piano goes well beyond the role of solo and accompaniment of the standard sonata. Koechlin’s use of modes rather than solely major and minor tonality creates a folk-like simplicity, a typical quality of his compositional style. The cyclic nature of the third movement in incorporating themes from the first and second movements creates an overarching cohesion that is effective and resourceful. The piece is not at all overtly political in character, but shows a progressive character and employs techniques that are found in Koechlin’s very best music.

**Trio, op. 92**

Koechlin’s Trio, op. 92 was written for flute, clarinet and bassoon with a version also for violin, viola and cello. It was premièred on May 6, 1927 at SMI. In a letter to the flautist Désormière, Koechlin wrote, “it is necessary to have very good players because there are some difficult spots and others that require some charm in the sonority.”

This Trio is in three movements all of which are fugal in nature, with each movement ending on a unison pitch. The use of flute instead of oboe is of interest and creates a unique timbre for the piece (The reed trio, consisting of oboe, clarinet and bassoon, is a popular combination for which many pieces have

---

been written.). Elise Kirk finds that “The charm of the work lies mainly in its contrapuntal Bach-like texture which remain French in simplicity and modern in multi-hued tonal colors.”

The first movement is entitled Lent, quasi adagio and begins with the bassoon stating the subject of the movement. The bassoon begins on beat two of a three four bar already displacing where the downbeat occurs (Ex. 2.10).

![Example 2.10, Trio, op. 92, mvt.1, mm. 1-7 in bassoon](image)

The movement continues in a straightforward fugue with each instrument entering with the subject or a variation of the subject. The movement is fraught with a feeling of unease that is created through the displacement of the downbeat and the static rhythmic profile employed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bassoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Flute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 beat 3</td>
<td>Bassoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 beat 2</td>
<td>Flute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 beat 2</td>
<td>Flute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 beat 1</td>
<td>Bassoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 beat 4</td>
<td>Flute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1, Entrances of fugal subject

---

The eerie and unsettling character of this movement stems from the melody starting on a weak beat and also by the lack of a clear and stable tonic center. Both of these aspects used by Koechlin help cast a spell on the audience and keep the performers engaged in the music. The use of extreme ranges paired against each other is another device that Koechlin often uses to increase tension. This can be seen in bar 19 (Ex. 2.11) between the flute and bassoon.

All three voices are treated as equal, exchanging the main melodic voice and countersubject throughout. Eighth notes are used to keep the energy of the movement moving forward and to seamlessly hand off the melody between instruments. “The open-ended design of the movement is obvious with the closing tonality of D which becomes the dominant of the last movement in G major.”

The movement ends on a unison D, very slow and extremely soft, much like the endings of the Septuor.

The second movement has a tempo marking of Moderato sans lenteur (moderately without slowing) and “flows in Palestrina-like serenity through basically diatonic lines, functional progressions, frequent suspension and clear tonal centers.” The movement begins with the clarinet introducing the subject of this second fugue marked sans nuances (without nuance) creating a steady, tranquil feel (Ex 2.12). The subject is ten bars long and quite simple,

---

68 Ibid., p. 101.
the first four bars consisting of a rising scale in thirds followed by a scalar, descending line back to the original pitch of concert f-sharp.

![Example 2.12, Trio, op. 92, mvt.2, mm. 1-10 in clarinet](image)

The key of the first statement can be seen as f-sharp Aeolian (f-sharp natural minor) or as A major but beginning on f-sharp.

The flute enters in bar 11 (Ex. 2.13) with the subject a fifth higher, while the clarinet continues with the countersubject that is rhythmically more active than the subject.

![Example 2.13, Trio, op. 92, mvt.2, mm. 11-16 in full score](image)

Each entry of the subject remains rhythmically the same while the pitches differ. This static rhythm contributes to the feeling of unease, creating a sense of movement but with an unclear destination. As Kirk observes “Variation is achieved each time by shifting the melodic weight throughout the instruments and modulating from f-sharp minor to c-sharp minor and other related keys.”

Conversely the countersubject is presented differently at every subject entrance. The subject repeats every ten bars until the last entrance of the flute in bar 91 where it is only nine bars, leaving a feeling of unease to the movement. The countersubject becomes more and more

---

rhythmic throughout the movement, creating forward momentum until bar 92 where the tension releases, finally ending in a unison f-sharp. The movement is very legato overall with slur and phrasing markings over each ten-bar phrase of the subject. The only exception to this is found in the bassoon in bar 55 (Ex. 2.14) where the two half note octave fs are indicated with staccatos under the slur mark and beat three of bar 59 to beat one of 60, also in the bassoon where the two notes are marked with a staccato and a tenuto mark under the slur.

Example 2.14, Trio, op. 92, mvt.2, mm. 55-60 in bassoon

With kind authorization of Editions Salabert

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Flute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Bassoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Bassoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Flute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Bassoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>Flute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2, Entrances of the subject

The last movement marked Final, is a fugue in three-part counterpoint marked allegro con motto (without rushing the movement). The clarinet begins as in the second movement, with
the opening statement of the fugue marked *mezzo forte* unlike the beginning of the previous two movements, which are marked *pianissimo* or *double pianissimo* (Ex. 2.15).

![Example 2.15, Trio, op. 92, mvt.3, mm. 1-downbeat of 6 in clarinet](image1)

Also included are the instructions *net et décidé* (marked and determined), which could be interpreted as steady and are marked at the first entrance of the subject for each instrument. The movement from the beginning seems more classical in form with its strict contrapuntal opening. The articulations and dynamics used also create a sound reminiscent of Bach of Handel.

The flute enters in bar six, stating the entire subject, while the bassoon enters in bar 10 with only half of the subject. The flute enters in bar 16 with a variation on the first subject whereby the sixteenth notes are changed to eighth notes; the bassoon repeats this variation of the subject starting in bar twenty. The movement is much more diatonic than the previous two movements, adding to the classical feel of the music.

The second episode begins in bar 24 (Ex. 2.16) with a second variation on the theme heard in the flute and then the bassoon. This second variation consists of the first three eighth notes of the main subject plus an ascending scale.

![Example 2.16, Trio, op. 92, mvt.3, mm. 24-25 in full score](image2)

The B theme begins in bar 44 (Ex. 2.17) with a pick-up note in the clarinet but is interrupted in bar 47 by the eighth note variation motive in the flute. The B theme is much more
legato and more reminiscent of Mozart than Bach, with the key center leaning more towards modal than diatonic.

The B motive returns in the bassoon with the pickups to bar 52 and is once again interrupted by the eighth note motive in the clarinet in bar 53. The flute continues with the B motive in pickups to bar 55 with the interruption once again in the clarinet in bar 56 and the bassoon responds with the same interruption in bar 57.

A third motive is first heard in the end of bar 60 (Ex. 2.18) in the bassoon. This motive is derived from the original theme and consists of three eighth notes on a repeated pitch.

The third motive is handed off between all three of the instruments while the bassoon enters with the variation on the first subject in bar 69. Bars 72-80 serve as a bridge to the third section, which Koechlin has marked as Stretto. In bar 81 (Ex. 2.19) the bassoon enters with the entire first motive starting on the same pitch that was first sounded in bar one. The flute enters with the entire first subject in bar 83 followed by the clarinet in bar 85 but with only half of the motive. Koechlin follows the Bach-like treatment of stretto by over-lapping the subjects of the fugue in short sections.
The third motive (three repeated eighths on the same pitch) returns in bar 87 (Ex. 2.20) in the bassoon and then is passed to the flute.

The B section lyrical motive is heard in the clarinet in bar 91 (Ex. 2.21) only to be interrupted in bar 94 by the flute with the first variation motive that is then repeated by the clarinet in bar 95. The same variation motive is heard in bars 98 and 99 in the clarinet and bassoon respectively (Ex. 2.21).
Bars 100 and 101 serve as a bridge to the B motive that is heard once again in the bassoon starting in bar 102 (Ex. 2.22) accompanied by the clarinet and flute with the repeated eighth note motive.

The second half of the first variation of the original subject is handed off between the instruments from measures 106-109. Starting in bar 112 is the reappearance of the running 16th note motive that is handed off between the three instruments. From measure 115 to the end, the first original motive is not heard at all in its entirety. Rather, the other three variations of the subject are handed off between the instruments with new accompaniment material interjected throughout. "Toward the close of the movement, linear tension increases, and the tonality seems
to expand through brief segments of polytonality, modal interchange and shifting.”\textsuperscript{70} The 16\textsuperscript{th} note motive is also handed off during this last episode culminating in and upward scalar pattern in all three instruments that stops abruptly in bar 149 (Ex. 2.23) with a hold on the upbeat of one followed by the first and only triple forte of the piece ending the entire work in G major, an emphatic, witty ending for a classically modeled piece.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example223.png}
\caption{Example 2.23, Trio, op. 92, mvt.3, mm. 148-150 in full score}
\end{figure}

This last final movement is longer than the two previous movements combined.

Trio, op. 92 is an example of Koechlin’s compositional approach and treatment of counterpoint and fugue. The Bachian treatment of counterpoint in form is skillfully combined with Koechlin’s use of modal tonality. The movement is a series of several episodes that lead one to the other but never quite reach a destination but rather seem to spin out of control, generating much energy and verve. Koechlin’s use of modality creates a folk-like sound to the piece with the use of contrapuntal techniques harkening back to the music of Bach. As Jim Samson rightly points out, “the exploratory harmonies in Koechlin’s early music mingle with elements derived from more traditional French styles, and occasionally, from Debussy.”\textsuperscript{71} This stylistic duality is found throughout Koechlin’s works but is also a quality found in the works of Poulenc.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{70} Krik, Elise Kuhl. \textit{The Chamber Music of Charles Koechlin (1867-1950)}, p. 103.
\textsuperscript{71} Samson, Jim. \textit{Music is Transition: A study of tonal expression and atonality, 1900-1920.} p. 64.
\end{flushright}
Koechlin’s Septuor was completed in 1937 during a lecture tour in America. It is dedicated to Paul Collaer who was the director of the Belgian Radio and organized many of the first performances of Koechlin’s works, Collaer was also a very close friend and advocate of Koechlin’s music. It was originally entitled, “Caprice sur le retour de mon fils Yves” (Caprice on return of my son Yves). The fugal final movement was actually the first music written and is based on a song his son Yves sang at the age of four. This same theme was also used in Koechlin’s ‘Jeux’ (Op. 124, No. 7). The entire piece was finished during a visit to America from July to August of 1937 with the fourth movement being written on a train ride from Chicago to Los Angeles on July 28. The Septuor was first premiered on March 17, 1943 through Paul Collaer and the Brussels Radio program.

Before the premiere, Koechlin sent parts and annotated notes for the performers to Collaer, dated January 29, 1943. The “Notes for the Execution of the Septet of Charles Koechlin” are as follows.

I. Monodie. Clarinet solo. Preferably for clarinet in A. Nothing in particular, it is a monody which should evolve with ease (however in time) and calmly without hurrying.

II. Pastorale. Always: the quarter note = quarter note of these changing measures. All at the beginning until (3) is calm and soft. At (3) it is rather spirited; gay and supple. The phrase should become more expansive (and allargando poco a poco) particularly at the 5th ms. After (4) and of a sustained sonority returning gradually

---

72 Orledge, Robert. Charles Koechlin - His Life and Works, p. 177.
73 Ibid., p. 177.
to Tempo 1 which reappears at (5). The closing is entirely pianissimo and luminous.

III. Intermezzo. The attacks should be very clear, but without harshness. The balance of the various parts is very difficult to obtain. It should be peaceful and pianissimo. The 3 measure after (1) and especially at (2) should be very subdued except the D of the bassoon, then the horn. (all of this is marked in the parts, however). The saxophone should play pianissimo as I have indicated, and after (3) it should not be more intense than the clarinet (2nd & 3rd measures after (3). If is necessary at (4) and even in the preceding measure, however, that the manner of expression be almost forte until the second measures after (4). The piu dolce of the 3rd ms. After (5) concerns even the beginning of the ms. Finally diminuendo until becoming ppp at the closing.

IV. Fugue (In a very free formal plan). It should be played with charm. The p should last until (3). After (3) the crescendo should be very sustained and at (4) very expressive. After (3) the flute should be brought out, then the oboe, then the clarinet. IF the flute does not have the B key, the Eng. Horn should play after (5).

V. Sérénité. This should sound well if the exact nuances are observed. It is especially important that it be extremely calm and that the saxophone, horn, bassoon play pp.

VI. Fugue. At the 4th entrance (bassoon) the theme should be clearly heard, ff in the bassoon until the diminuendo, In addition, the 6th entry (Eng. horn) should be well marked, and especially the bassoon at (3) and the horn at (4). It is essential to play p at (5) (except the theme in the oboe), then pp and lightly at the 3rd
measure after (5). But then it can proceed out well at (6). The 4 measures after (7) should be ff; resume f (or even mf) at the 5th after (7). At (8) crescendo well, then move on, very sustained, until the closing.  

The piece calls for woodwind quintet (flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and horn) along with English horn and Alto saxophone. It is broken into 6 movements: Monodie, Pastorale, Intermezzo, Fugue, Sérénité and Fugue. The first movement, Monodie, is for solo clarinet in A with the key sounding in G major though “the scale step critical to establishing the exact modality (or tonality) is omitted, such as the seventh…” The melody is a plain folksong-like melody in a 12/8 triple feel (Ex. 2.24). Elise Kirk comments that “By opening his Septet with a short lilting clarinet monody, Koechlin introduces the pastoral element which becomes characteristic of the work as a whole.”

While it sounds simplistic, the use of syncopation displaces the downbeat and helps to create this simple sound. The first movement is a look into Koechlin’s compositional process in that he always started with a melody and then later added the accompaniment and chordal structure. The pastoral feel of the movement continues throughout the piece and can be heard as a nod to Koechlin’s pantheistic and nature mystic views of life and the world around him. The use of solo clarinet for the first movement helps set the tranquil tone of the entire piece and also serves as an introduction or rather an invocation to the music that is about to be presented.

---

75 Ibid., p. 327.
76 Ibid., p. 270.
The second movement, the Pastorale, is like the Trio, op. 92 in that it is written for flute, clarinet and bassoon but the similarities stop there. The first two bars are written in free time, without use of time signatures, with the flute and then bassoon introducing the main theme of the Pastorale (Ex. 2.25), “a simple shepherd’s pipe tune of triadic outlines.” In bar three the clarinet enters repeating the same opening melody but restricted by a changing time signature as well as pitches altered from the first two bars. The three instruments are left suspended in d minor for two beats before the flute enters in bar six with a variation on the melody presented in bar one. Lastly the bassoon enters in bar nine with a rhythmically and metrically altered version of the melody introduced in bar two, a variation of the theme that enhances its tranquil, reflective character.

Example 2.25, Septuor d'Instruments à Vent, op. 165, mvt.2, mm. 1-12
Reproduced with permission from The University of Melbourne

The B section begins in bar 23 (Ex. 2.26) with the clarinet presenting a 16\textsuperscript{th} note motive that is exchanged between instruments throughout the section.

![Example 2.26, Septuor d'Instruments à Vent, op. 165, mvt.2, mm. 23-27](image)
Reproduced with permission from The University of Melbourne

A variation of the A section melody returns in bar 36 (Ex. 2.27) in the flute similar to the opening of the movement.

![Example 2.27, Septuor d'Instruments à Vent, op. 165, mvt.2, mm. 36-39 in full score](image)
Reproduced with permission from The University of Melbourne

The movement slowly dissipates into a pianissimo concert C from all three instruments, reminiscent of Koechlin’s Trio, op. 92.

The movement is a series of melodic statements accompanied by drones found in the accompaniment voices. Each of the melodies moves to new harmonic center but not diatonically
where the listener would expect. Tonally “the movement proceeds through the circle of fifths and back again in a flexible, non-structured motion.”\(^{78}\) The abrupt shifts to the new melodies are prepared with sudden uses of silence, creating an unease that continues throughout the piece.

In the third movement marked Intermezzo, all seven of the instruments are finally utilized. The first two bars serve as an introduction to the flute that enters in the third bar with the melody (Ex. 2.28). “The melodic core of the Intermezzo is a dual one contrasting the long, sinuous conjunct line, which initiates in the flute, with the punctuative rhythmic motif of a fifth tossed among the remaining instruments.”\(^ {79}\)

![Example 2.28, Septuor d'Instruments à Vent, op. 165, mvt.3, mm. 1-3 in full score](image)

Reproduced with permission from The University of Melbourne

The “cuck-coo”\(^ {80}\) call and response of the first two bars serve as the main accompaniment pattern for the entirety of the movement, moving from instrument to instrument, with the bird like call continuing the pastoral theme of the piece. The flute melody continues in bar seven (Ex. 2.29) with the first variation of the melody (a).

---


\(^{79}\) Ibid., p. 272.

In bar nine (Ex. 2.30) the second variation of the melody (b) is seen in the flute supported by the bassoon with the (a) variation.

Bar eleven (Ex. 2.31) is the first use of the third variation of the melody (c) heard in the clarinet.

Next in bar 15 the clarinet enters with the b variation followed by the oboe in bar 17 with the fragmented a variation (which can also be heard as the cuck-coo motive). Finally in bar 19 (Ex. 2.32) the (a) melody is presented by the clarinet while the (b) melody is in saxophone and the (c) melody is heard in the horn.
In the next bar (20) the horn continues with the (c) melody while the flute takes over the (b) melody and the oboe enters with the (a) melody. The next four bars consist of the (a) cuck-coo melody being passed through the ensemble. This leads to a fragmentation of the (b) melody passed from flute to English horn, clarinet, bassoon then back to flute, clarinet and finally to the bassoon with an unfinished version of the (b) fragment. The entire movement ends in a whirlwind that resolves abruptly on a b minor chord. Rhythmically the movement is continuously moving forward, using the “cuck-coo” motive to propel the forward movement until it finally has to stop, never reaching a destination.

The oboe begins the fourth movement, Fugue, presenting the two bar subject in B major (Ex. 2.33), the subject is “…Bach-like and is treated characteristically in sequence, inversion and related procedures.”

![Example 2.33, Septuor d'Instruments à Vent, op. 165, mvt.4, mm. 1-2 in oboe](Reproduced with permission from The University of Melbourne)

The English horn enters in bar three (Ex. 2.34) with a statement of the subject while the oboe continues with the countersubject.

![Example 2.34, Septuor d'Instruments à Vent, op. 165, mvt.4, mm. 3-4 in full score](Reproduced with permission from The University of Melbourne)

Koechlin treats this 22-bar movement as one entire episode of a fugue with a total of 12 entrances of the subject with five of them false entrances or incomplete statements of the subject.

---

The order of the instruments used creates an interesting timbre quality that begins with a double reed sound that then moves to single reed, flute and lastly French horn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Oboe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>English horn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Bassoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>Saxophone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten (beat three)</td>
<td>Flute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twelve (beat two)</td>
<td>English horn (false entrance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirteen (beat one)</td>
<td>Oboe (false entrance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirteen (beat two)</td>
<td>Bassoon (false entrance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourteen</td>
<td>Flute (subject variation, S1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixteen</td>
<td>Flute (first two beats of subject)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighteen (beat three)</td>
<td>Horn (only first half of subject)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3, Subject entrances

Along with the entrances of the subject and countersubject, other noteworthy musical events ensue. For example, in bar 12, the key shifts from D-flat to E-flat major and then modulates back to the home key of B major in bar 16. With regard to the subject itself, it is last heard in the French horn in bar 18 but only the first half of the subject is played. From bar 19 until the end, only fragments of the countersubject are heard but with use of dynamics creates an intensity that is then released with the movement once again ending as softly as possible on a B major chord.
The fifth movement, entitled Sérénité, includes explicit instructions on how the piece is to be approached and performed. The first instruction is “In this Septet and throughout movement five, it is very necessary to establish balance between the saxophone and clarinet, that is to say moderate the saxophone, that the tone blends easily with that of the clarinet.” Next, the tempo marking is calm and very soft with the additional instructions of “very calm at the quarter note to equal 60. Must be played extremely soft, repeated notes connected-the attacks very soft.” These instructions, if followed faithfully, produce music that is very typical of Koechlin, creating a soft, ethereal and simple while still complex sound. These trademarks are what allow his music to be engagingly beautiful to listen to while also creating considerable difficulties for the performers. The use of such soft dynamics throughout easily creates intonation problems if the performers are not able to render the dynamics correctly. The ethereal and tranquil mood that is expressed in this movement can only be achieved by respecting the directions Koechlin has given.

The movement begins with the melody in the Saxophone on a repeated concert A (Ex. 2.35) which creates a “feeling of stillness and inner peace.”

This repeated note motive is found throughout the movement and serves not only as the melody but also as the accompaniment in other voices. The English horn enters with the melody in bar

---

82 Translated from the original French in the score by the author. (Dans ce Septuor, et surtout dans ce No. V, il faut bien établir l’équilibre entre Sax. Et Cl. C’est-à-dire modérer le sax., don’t la sonorité l’emporte volontiers sur celle de la clarinette.)

83 Translated from the original French in score (Calme, très doux. Très calme à la noire. A jouer extrêmement doux, Presque lié pour les notes répétées – les attaues très douces.)

84 Orledge, Robert. Charles Koechlin - His Life and Works, p. 178.
four continuing with the repeated a motive, which the Saxophone restarts in bar five. By this point, the key center of a minor has been solidly established. The English horn states a variation of the melody in bar seven (Ex. 2.36) with the saxophone accompanying with a countermelody. The movement begins quiet and calm but with a rhythmic energy that is present throughout the movement.

In measure 11 the saxophone takes up the melody, only to be interrupted by the English horn in the second half of measure twelve finishing the statement started by the saxophone. The use of saxophone and English horn interplay creates a very distinct timbral quality to the melody that has more of a jazz influence than is heard elsewhere in the piece. The English horn continues with the melody in bar 15 and finally the oboe takes over the melody if only for three beats in bar 17. The flute states another variation on the melody in bar 18 with the English horn once again interrupting and restating the original repeated a melody in bar 20. The piece ends with a statement of the melody variation in the clarinet, with the rest of the ensemble resting on a D major chord.

Koechlin's uses of syncopations are the only interruptions to this otherwise fluid and tranquil movement. Such syncopations are found in measure 11 (Ex. 2.38) in the French horn where the use of dotted quarter notes are juxtaposed against the quarter notes found in the saxophone melody.
This type of hemiola is found in several other measures of the movement creating a slight disturbance of where the downbeat lays. Koechlin’s use of pairing the saxophone with the English horn on the melody adds a quality that is not heard in any of the other movements, it adds to the tranquility while also creating an edge to the sound.

The final movement is the second fugue of the piece entitled “Fugue (on a melody of my son Yves).” This fugue also includes instructions concerning note length of the melodic line, “without heaviness, but hold out the quarter notes and accentuate the eighth notes. The quarter notes must not be played louder than the eighth notes.” The tempo marking is *Allegro, animé (but without rushing)*, dotted quarter at 100 (*the same or a little more quickly*). The horn enters with the three bar subject (Ex. 2.39) which Elise Kirk describes as “trochaic in pulse and step-wise in its construction.” The subject is one bar longer then the subject of the fourth movement fugue.

---

85 Translated from the original French in score by the author (Sure un thème de mon fils Yves).
86 Translated from the original French in score by the author. “Sans lourdeur, mais en tenant bien les noires, et en accentuant bien les croches. Les noires ne devient pas être jouées plus forte que les croches.”
As in the fourth movement, there are 12 entrances of the subject.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Horn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Saxophone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bassoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Flute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Oboe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>English horn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Horn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Oboe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Flute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Clarinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>New subject in Clarinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Original subject in Flute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4, Subject entrances

The movement begins in A major but shifts through many key centers throughout the 48 bars finishing cyclically in A major. Only two of the shifts are marked key signature changes, in measure 24 the sharps found in measure one are replaced by three naturals, though at measure 42 the original key signature returns. The change of key in measure 24 is dwarfed by the implied key center of D flat major in the music. The shifting harmonic centers are not modulations but rather brief flirtations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Key center</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>E major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>A major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>B major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>G-sharp major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>E major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>B major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>C-sharp major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>D-flat major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>B-flat minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>F-sharp minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>D major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>D-flat major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>A major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.5, Shifting harmonic centers

The movement seems out of place when compared to the previous five movements. The music is much more episodic and straightforward with regard to form while chaotic in feel. The use of dynamics, the thickness of texture as well as the register of instruments used throughout create a somewhat chaotic feeling. The previous movements are short melodies that meander around without a clear destination. The final Fugue movement has purpose and its goal-directed character stands apart from the rest of the piece.

Robert Orledge states, “the perfect fifth of the Yves theme becomes the unifying theme of the entire piece though only finally recognized at the end.”

melodic patterns of the Patsorale movement, the punctuation interjections of the Intermezzo and the fifth that is the supporting bass pedal in the Sérénité.\textsuperscript{89} Using this idea of the Yves theme as a unifying factor, the Septet itself could be thought of as a cyclic work, with each movement relating to the next and the entire piece being held together by one perfect fifth.

Koechlin’s \textit{Septour} employs several of the compositional techniques and styles present in the previous two pieces we have discussed. There is a conspicuous use of modes to define tonal centers while the music shifts through several modes in one movement, the continued Bachian treatment of counterpoint in the fugal movements, and Koechlin’s use of melodies constructed on simple folk songs are found in the three pieces discussed. David McKinney describes French folk music as containing specific qualities such as, diatonic melodies, melancholy or pensive in character, modal progressions and cadences, and the use of a narrow melodic range.\textsuperscript{90} This description also describes the melodies found in the three works discussed by Koechlin. Although the works might not be based on direct quotations of French folk songs, Koechlin use of stylistic allusion is prominent. Specific to the \textit{Septour} is the use of timbre to create distinct colors and qualities. Prominent too is the use of freetime sections, which allow an openness and ethereal quality to the music. The use of the perfect fifth creates a cyclic nature to the \textit{Septour} that is also seen in the \textit{Sonata}. Melodies are constructed on simple folk-like songs

While the three works we have discussed are not representative of Koechlin’s political works they share many characteristics with these pieces. Koechlin’s use of modes and applying them to a Bach-like treatment of counterpoint and fugue creates a French sound that will been

\textsuperscript{89} Orledge, Robert. \textit{Charles Koechlin - His Life and Works}, p. 178.  
seen in Poulenc’s works as well. The use of French folk-like melodies can also signal the nationalist flavor of Koechlin’s works. Another of Koechlin’s compositional techniques that is seen in all three pieces is the feeling of perpetually moving forward but never finding a destination. The use of a pastoral or folk-like melody is also present in all three pieces we have examined. Both of these techniques may stem from Koechlin’s pantheistic views as well as his great interest in nature mysticism.
Chapter Three: Francis Poulenc

Francis Poulenc was born on January 7, 1899 in Paris to a wealthy, bourgeois family. His twofold heritage, Averyronnais on his father’s side and Parisian on his mother’s, may have provided a duality that is key to Poulenc’s musical personality, embracing both the “profane and religious.” Claude Rostand has stated that, “in Poulenc there is something of the monk and something of the rascal.”91 At the age of five Poulenc began his musical training at the piano where he fostered his talent and taste for music. He followed the wishes of his father and attended the Lycée Condorcet receiving a classical education. He did this only with the promise of his father that once he completed his studies, he would be allowed to enroll in the Paris Conservatoire and continue his musical endeavors. These plans were thwarted by the onset of the war and the death of his parents.

From 1914-1917 Poulenc studied piano privately with Ricardo Viñes, a promoter of Debussy, Ravel and Satie, who became a close friend and advocate of Poulenc’s compositions, premiering many of his works for piano. It was through Viñes that Poulenc first met Auric, Satie, Stravinsky, Ravel, Cocteau and many French poets whose text Poulenc would later use in his songs.

On May 18, 1917, Parade premiered. Performed by the Ballet Russes, the scenario by Jean Cocteau, the score by Erik Satie and the sets and costumes designed by Pablo Picasso. This eminent work initiated the shift towards anti-Wagnerism in Paris. A young Francis Poulenc was in attendance along with several other young French composers. “After the blow of the Sacre du

Printemps, Satie fully realized himself, he brought back music to simplicity and opened the path for the French musicians of the school ‘d’Après Guerre.’”

Erik Satie was first introduced to Gregorian modes at a young age while attending Catholic mass. Satie enrolled in the Paris Conservatoire in 1879 to study piano. He was later dismissed in 1882 due to a lack of improvement. He later enrolled at the Schola Cantorum in 1905 to study counterpoint and graduated in 1908. “He [Satie] anticipated the cult of the music hall, he anticipated Dada, he anticipated the revival of interest in classical contrapuntal procedures. He was writing in 1889 the kind of music that half of the young musicians in France would be writing in the 1920’s.”

Erik Satie soon became the man young composers wanted to emulate. Luckily Satie enjoyed the limelight and collected followers. Satie formed a nucleus of composers, Les Nouveaux Jeunes, a group whom he believed followed the same aesthetics and musical ideals. Satie’s music “was clear-cut, unambitious, brief; it eschewed grandiloquent effects and large orchestras; it relied on line for its effect.” The composers that comprised Les Nouveaux Jeunes were George Auric, Louis Durey, Darius Milhaud and Arthur Honegger. Milhaud was a member in absentia from 1917-1919 while serving the military in Brazil as Paul Claudel’s secretary. “The formation of “Les Nouveaux Jeunes” brought with it a new French sensibility which assailed

---

95 Ibid., p. 9.
Debussyan, Impressionism and championed instead the simplicity, the tunefulness, and the popular idioms of Satie’s Parade.”

December 11, 1917 saw the public premiere of Poulenc’s *Rhapsodie Nègre*. The performance riled the audience and set off a scandal. “By the time the entire program was repeated, on 15 January 1918, Poulenc had earned the reputation of an “enfant terrible” and his name had become linked with those of Satie, Cocteau and Les Nouveaux Jeunes.” Germaine Tailleforee was also added to *Les Nouveaux Jeunes* in the fall of 1917. From “1917-1918 concerts of their [Les Nouveaux Jeunes] music [were] performed regularly at the Salle Huyghens.”


The six composers in question were Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, Arthur Honegger, Georges Auric, Louis Durey and Germaine Tailleferre. While Satie was considered the Father of

---

98 Ibid., p. 10.
99 Ibid., p. 41.
Les Six he “…did not belong to our Group, but his melodic line, so pure, so discreet, so noble, was always an example for Les”\(^\text{100}\) (Shead quoting Cocteau).

The members of Les Six were extremely different from each other in personality, musical preference, and compositional technique but as Darius Milhaud stated, “only diversity, fancy, imagination can give life to art.”\(^\text{101}\) Though the members differed they were linked by certain musical goals, by an “instructive thirst for reaction against Impressionism and for a return to the soberness of expression in the building of a work as well as in simplicity of the harmonic line.”\(^\text{102}\) David McKinney seems to agree stating, “[Les Six] were replacing the loftiness of nineteenth century German music and French Impressionism with a truly French music characterized by brevity, clarity and a use of popular sources.”\(^\text{103}\)

We have summarized above, the history of the rise of French Nationalism in relation to the politicization of the arts and music, and considered Koechlin’s political involvement. Poulenc’s role in French politics of the time was negligible, as he had no overt ties to any political party. Poulenc however did participate in the rise of patriotism, during the interwar years. Charlène St-Aubin states, “in the case of Poulenc it is more accurate to qualify his actions and views as patriotic rather than nationalist.”\(^\text{104}\) Poulenc was politically branded Left due to his involvement with Les Six but personally had no affiliation to either side. In the late 1930’s


\(^{102}\) Ibid., p. 549.


Poulenc began to identify with the more conservative Right after returning to Catholicism. He was however, greatly influenced by the cultural climate of the time especially through his fellow composers of Les Six. “Although their [Les Six] responses were not yet politically articulate, Les Six never the less assumed the role of intellectuals by addressing their primary questions posed by the post war order in France.”

The influence of Parisian popular music on the compositions of Francis Poulenc is undeniable. The majority of documents, articles and books on the topic of Poulenc include some reference to the role of popular music in Poulenc’s life from childhood to death. “As a young boy, his taste centered around the French song-writers Henri Christine and Vincent Scotto whose tunes were often performed by small orchestras or accordion players at the bals musettes and at popular guinguettes such as Café Bébert.” Poulenc was known to frequent the Folies Bergère, a cabaret music hall located in Paris known for its revues, including the 1926 revue La Folle du jour featuring Josephine Baker. Other performers included Maurice Chevalier and Mistinguett, who at one time was the highest paid female entertainer in the world as well as the most popular French entertainer. In 1919 her legs were insured for 500,000 francs. She recorded her first popular song in 1916, entitled “Mon Homme,” a song that is a wonderful example of the chanson form and style, made popular by chanson singers of the time. Poulenc was greatly influenced by several chanteuses including Jeanne Bloch, Damia, Mistinguett and Edith Piaf. The songs sung by these women would have a profound impact on the melodies of Francis Poulenc but also on the music of all of Paris. Poulenc admired and respected the songwriters as much as the singers.

---

with composers such as Maurics Yvain, Henri Christiné, and Vincent Scotto influencing him from an early age.

David McKinney states that the chansons of the music hall can be sorted into two stylistic categories. The first style of chanson is extroverted, carefree and good-natured, while the second is more sentimental, reflective and melodramatic. The two distinct categories are later further described with the first being “gay and unblushing youthful, dance-like in character, at times approaching vulgarity.”\textsuperscript{107} The first group of chanson is also monothematic and strongly diatonic. The second reflective group contains an “air of melancholy often bordering on sentimentality yet they are poignant and even compelling. The music features a luxuriant broken-chord accompaniment and a melodic line of great allure.”\textsuperscript{108} The description of these two distinct styles of chanson will be important when applied to the works of Poulenc discussed in this document.

The stylistic traits associated with popular music of Poulenc’s time are described by Charlène St-Aubin as music that is in triple meter with a melody in eight bar phrases Tonally there are shifts from minor in the verse to major during the refrain. The melodies are easily singable and memorable achieved by the use of limited range, stepwise or scalar motion, arpeggiated leaps and a predominance of thirds and perfect fourths and fifths. “Although Poulenc primarily employed stylistic allusion by frequently imitating the general style of the Parisian chanson of the early twentieth-century, he did model a number of his forms, rhythms and performance practices on Parisian popular music without necessarily referencing a specific

\textsuperscript{107} McKinney, David Conley. \textit{The influence of Parisian popular entertainment on the piano works of Erik Satie and Francis Poulenc}, p. 66.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., p. 66.
work.” At the foundation of the three pieces found in this discussion is a nostalgia for the past that is heard through allusion to popular music of the time. “For Francis Poulenc, the world of popular amusement evoked his past and specifically the everyday sights and sounds of his youth. Nostalgic memories of experiences on the streets of Nogent-sur-Marne and in the café-concerts and music-halls of Paris were an important component of Poulenc’s adult sensibility…”

Poulenc looked to the music of his personal past to influence his melodies but he harkened back even farther to 18th century France for structure and form. He used the bones of 18th century music on which to hang his present-day melodies. “He sought to comment not on the music or style of the 18th century but rather on its cultural essence, its “spirit”, as communicated through the language of the present.” Several outside cultural factors influenced Poulenc and these influences are what create the sound associated with his music. As Jane Fulcher states, “Popular tunes, [Poulenc] argued, imparted not only a directness of expression but a national voice to modern music.”

The chamber music of Francis Poulenc incorporates several unifying traits; with regard to the three pieces presented in this discussion, the following compositional traits will be explored. The role of ostinato in several forms, cyclic motives used within movements or entire works, the use of a “wrong” note, structural form, harmonic devices, articulations, dynamics and lastly the role of silence. Along with these traits the influence of popular entertainment of the time will also be addressed.

---

112 Ibid., p. 164.
Poulenc’s association with Koechlin

Before 1921 Francis Poulenc was the only French composer of note who had not studied at the Paris Conservatoire. In September of 1921, Poulenc sent his first letter to Koechlin asking to become his pupil:

“I do not want to wait until I return to Paris to express the very great desire that I have to work with you. Circumstances, and in particular three years of military service which I completed in January 1921, have prevented any sustained study until now. I have had enough of this now and wish to place myself very seriously in your hands. I hope that you will accept a pupil as self-educated as myself and that my ignorance will not repel you. With your help, I would like to become a musician. I shall be back in Paris around the 20th, at 83 rue de Monceau [8e]. If I receive a favourable reply from you – which I earnestly hope for – we can meet to make all the necessary arrangements.”

The actions that led to the writing of this letter were quite innocent. Poulenc confided to his friend and fellow Les Six member Milhaud that he felt the need to receive formal training in counterpoint and fugue. Poulenc felt that he could not be as prolific a composer as he wanted if he continued to rely on his natural talent, a sentiment that he shared with Satie, who also received private formal training in counterpoint and fugue after being denied entrance to the Conservatoire. Milhaud suggested Charles Koechlin, having studied with him earlier. Milhaud himself even wrote a letter to Koechlin on Poulenc’s behalf dated September 21:

---

114 Ibid., p. 12.
“Poulenc is looking forward to working with you. I hope you will be very strict. You are the only one who can teach him his craft. He is a charming boy, marvelously gifted and very rich (his pap has sold lots of chemical products so that he can make music).”\textsuperscript{116}

By 1921 Poulenc’s music was on the verge of atonality, using parallel 9ths and 4ths based on 7\textsuperscript{th} chords, as seen in his piano works especially the \textit{Promenades}. These devices were also seen in the music of Milhaud and Koechlin who “wrote in similar style, making frequent use of linear polytonality and rhythmic complexity.”\textsuperscript{117} Poulenc’s ballet \textit{Les Biches} was also a motive for his beginning lessons with Koechlin. Poulenc felt that \textit{Les Biches} could be the work that catapulted him to fame and because of that he felt he needed formal harmonic and contrapuntal training.

From November 1921 to July 1922, Poulenc had no less than 38 lessons with Koechlin occurring on Mondays and Thursdays at the cost of 20 Francs an hour.\textsuperscript{118} During these lessons, Koechlin would give Poulenc a melody, composed by Koechlin or Bach, and have Poulenc harmonize the melody in four-part counterpoint. Poulenc enjoyed his instruction, feeling that Koechlin treated his students as individuals and never stifled their distinctiveness. Within the exercises assigned, Poulenc did not always follow Bach’s rules of counterpoint, using unprepared ninths and failing to resolves 7ths by step. Koechlin did not correct the errors for the reason that he “liked the sound they made.”\textsuperscript{119} Koechlin soon realized that “tedious counterpoint exercises were not the thing for Poulene,”\textsuperscript{120} and decided rather to work on harmony. For the

\begin{enumerate}
\item[Buckland, Sidney and Myriam Chimènes. \textit{Francis Poulenc: Music, Art, and Literature}, p. 13.\textsuperscript{116}]
\item[Ibid., p. 13.\textsuperscript{117}]
\item[Ibid., p. 13.\textsuperscript{118}]
\item[Ibid., p. 20.\textsuperscript{119}]
\item[Ivry, Benjamin. \textit{Francis Poulenc}. London: Phaidon, 1996. Print, p. 44.\textsuperscript{120}]
\end{enumerate}
harmonic exercises, Koechlin would supply a melody by J.S. Bach or himself and have Poulenc harmonize the melodies. According to Koechlin “there was never just one right answer, or that the master could also break the rules, would surely have been encouraging to his young pupil (Poulenc).”\textsuperscript{121} In a letter from January of 1923, Koechlin confessed to Milhaud his pleasure with Poulenc’s recent compositions, finding them very well written, especially the Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon.\textsuperscript{122}

After July of 1922 Poulenc became immersed in his work on \textit{Les Biches}, and suspended his lessons with Koechlin. The lessons resumed from January-March of 1923. \textit{Les Biches} was commissioned by Diaghilev for the Ballet Russe and was first premiered in Monte Carlo in 1924. In March of 1925, Poulenc once again resumed his lessons with Koechlin. At this time they may have discussed Poulenc’s Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano being that Koechlin had just finished this own Trio, op. 92 for Flute, Clarinet and Bassoon. By 1928 Koechlin had come to the opinion that Poulenc’s works were at their best when they were neo-classically influenced with a Mozartian feel, such as in his \textit{Trio Op. 43}. “Above all, Koechlin never restricted Poulenc’s individuality, but gave him the technical assurance he needed for his career to develop.”\textsuperscript{123}

\textbf{Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon, op. 32}

Poulenc's Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon was written soon after his Sonata for Two Clarinets of 1918. The Sonata is dedicated to Madame Audrey Parr who was the designer for

\begin{footnotes}
\item[121] Buckland, Sidney and Myriam Chimènes. \textit{Francis Poulenc: Music, Art, and Literature}, p. 21.
\item[122] Ibid., p. 25.
\item[123] Ibid., p. 41.
\end{footnotes}
Milhaud’s ballet *L’Homme et son Désir* and a close friend of Poulenc’s.124 Where as the Sonata for Two Clarinets, was not as successful as Poulenc had hoped The Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon is a “reflection of Poulenc’s greater understanding of the way the two instruments differ and how they blend.”125 The Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon fits into the first of three chronological groups of Poulenc’s chamber music. The first group, from 1918-1926, is categorized by music under 10 minutes in length, acidly witty, using plain triadic and scalar themes, with dissonance, while also sharing the spirit of the 18th century divertissement.126

The Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon fits this description and is also influenced by popular entertainment of the time, the circus. The three most predominant circuses during the late 1880s-1920s were the *Cirque de Paris, Nouveau Cirque and Cirque Médrano*.127 Music played a crucial role at the circus especially for the circus performers. Each act had a story to tell and a different style of music required to partake in the performance. “…the heavy lifters wanted a march with a victorious air, while the parallel bars, the floor gymnastics and the trampoline artists looked for the frenzied rhythms of the gallop. The Icarian games (human juggling) required a waltz; jugglers wanted a varied music that was discrete with a muted accompaniment.”128 This eclectic mix of styles created the sense of organized chaos that is associated with the circus. With regard to Poulenc, the influence of the circus is seen in what McKinney describes as the “comic effects” of his music. These effects include sudden dynamic

127 St-Aubin, Charlène. *Francis Poulenc, Nostalgia and Parisian popular culture*, p. 110.
128 Ibid., p. 115.
contrasts, presto tempo inscriptions, unexpected accents, use of commas, misplaced accents and break neck tempo.\textsuperscript{129}

The form of the Sonata is fast-slow-fast, like the Sonata for Two Clarinets, a very typical form for a three-movement piece. “Poulenc, as one would expect, chose conservative, traditional forms, for his chamber works, but he was a modernist in the way he manipulated the material within these forms.”\textsuperscript{130} Milhaud described the Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon as “a perfect wonder of gaiety, precision, charm and grace.”\textsuperscript{131}

Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon begins with the first movement entitled Allegro. The tempo is marked Très rythmé with the quarter note at 144. The movement begins with the melody (Ex. 3.1), introduced by the clarinet, marked forte with the directions les accents très marques (very marked accents). The bassoon begins the eighth note accompaniment marked mezzo forte and staccato. The melody is circus-like in quality with the use of the upper register of the clarinet, syncopation and differing articulations creating this feel. The faster tempo of the movement creates a feel of organized chaos adding to the humor of the piece.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example3_1.png}
\caption{Example 3.1, Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon, op. 32, mvt.1, mm. 1-3}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{129} McKinney, David Conley. \textit{The influence of Parisian popular entertainment on the piano works of Erik Satie and Francis Poulenc}, ps. 63-66.
\textsuperscript{130} Stringer, Mary Ann. \textit{Diversity as Style in Poulenc’s Chamber works with Piano}. D.M.A. document, University of Oklahoma, 1986. p. 32.
The full melody of the first movement may be heard as two separate phrases. The first, measures 1-5, is in the upper register of the clarinet and marked forte. The second sounds mid-register and at mezzo forte. Poulenc’s use of register and dynamics creates an eerie call and response quality to this main melody. The main motive is heard once in its full form from measures 1-10. The melody returns two more separate times but only as fragments that are then developed upon. Throughout the movement the clarinet carries the melody while the bassoon plays the role of the accompaniment. In measures 25 and 27 (Ex. 3.2) there is an isolated event of voice exchange between the instruments, trading from melody to accompaniment.

For both Poulenc and Koechlin, melody was to the forefront at all times. The melody employed in the first movement seems more influenced by Satie than Poulenc’s later melodies. The unwritten but implied polymeter as well as the use of modal mixture, D Ionian/Phrygian, create a melody that appears unhinged. This passage is classical in form but acidly witty in character.

The use of rests or silence is utilized throughout the movement to add to the witty quality of the music. The rests bring a forced and abrupt halt to the music. Rather than using developmental material as transitions, Poulenc often employs silence to move from section to
section. In both transitions, to and from the B section, Poulenc uses silence. This is another example of Poulenc’s modern twist on classical formal function. Syncopation is also used to add to the overall circus like sound. The syncopations are created by the use of tied eighth notes, displacing the feeling of a downbeat. This can be seen in the opening melody and the variations of the main motive (Ex. 3.3).

Poulenc’s use of differing articulations underscores the displacement of the beat. This can be seen in measure 18 (Ex. 3.4) of the bassoon, the use of a tenuto on the upbeat of the second beat of a three-four measure creates an internal hemiola within the line. In the following measure (Ex. 3.4) the clarinet enters with quarter notes against the eighth notes in the bassoon further adding to the syncopated feel of the bassoon.

Throughout the movement there is a feeling of tensional unease due to the syncopation and articulation. This tension is conveyed by an ever shifting time signature.

The bassoon displays many trademark ostinato patterns associated with Poulenc. The slurred two-note figures seen in measures 8, 16 and 25 often serve as accompaniment. In measures 1-4 the bassoon accompaniment ostinato is scalar while implying the polymeter of 5/4, 4/4, 5/4, which also fits the clarinet melody. The low e-flat in the bassoon during the opening is
an example of Poulenc’s wrong note technique. This idea is often used when a classical technique is employed and Poulenc adds a dissonant, spicy “wrong note,” mixing wit with the classical character. The e-flat aurally clashes against the concert d of the clarinet but the e-flat is necessary for the implied key center of D Phrygian. This use of modal mixture is another modern twist on the classical feeling of the movement. Of course, such twists can be regarded as a neoclassical trait. A composer like Mozart is often highly resourceful in pitting powerful dissonances against a stable musical structure.

Measures 69-71 (Ex 3.5) can be seen as three separate and independent interjections as fragments of the main melody. The interjections continue with measures 72-74, a tongue-in-cheek statement isolated from any of the music previously presented. The syncopation found in measure 71 (Ex. 3.5) on the offbeat as well as the grace notes in the clarinet in bars 72-73 is very reminiscent of the Trio and Sextet of Poulenc’s second group of chamber works. Poulenc’s use of marked comma breaths as well as fermata bar lines create silence likely influenced by the circus as St-Aubin states: “…the orchestra’s silence, its sudden break from the constant sound making, indicated anticipation.”

Poulenc’s use of silence in the Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon often serves as an anticipatory device, while also creating whimsical unpredictability. Consider for instance the pauses after the strident gestures in measure 69 and 71, followed by a change in meter. The Coda beginning at measure 75 (Ex. 3.5) is quite humorous, right down to the final understated closing gesture. Such humor is a trademark of Poulenc’s works.

Throughout the movement Poulenc employs several techniques to convey humor and wit in the music, with the interplay and voice exchange between bassoon and clarinet being the most obvious examples. Poulenc also uses the two instruments pitted against each other to create an

---

132 St-Aubin, Charlène. *Francis Poulenc, Nostalgia and Parisian popular culture*, p. 115.
atmosphere of organized chaos that may well evoke images of a circus in the streets of Paris.
The use of extremes in both instruments registers, high and low, as well as the driving accompany pulse of the bassoon against the clarinet melody and the use of sudden and abrupt halts to the music all add to the comic effects of this movement.

![Example 3.5, Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon, op.32, mvt.1, mm. 67-81](image)

© Copyright 1922 Chester Music Limited. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured.

**Formal Overview of Allegro**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>1-22</td>
<td>23-61</td>
<td>62-81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second movement titled Romance, is marked andante and very soft, much like Koechlin’s music. In this movement the clarinet takes the melodic lead as “the incarnation of
romance.” This romantic melody is accompanied by the bassoon with arpeggiated syncopation that must be approached with the highest level of finesse less they sound uneven and distract from the legato flowing melody (Ex. 3.6).

Example 3.6, Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon, op.32, mvt.2, mm. 1-2 in full score
© Copyright 1922 Chester Music Limited. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured.

F Lydian serves as the key center for the movement but in measure five, the introduction of the c# in the bassoon shifts the key to F Lydian augmented. From measures 17-24 the key center shifts through several modes based on f as the tonic until the opening music returns in measure 25, bringing the movement to a close in F Lydian. Much like the first movement, modal mixture is employed throughout the movement. “The Clarinet/Bassoon duo is, to a great extent, non-tonal with tonal-harmonic implications found at the beginning and close of sections.”

In the Romance Poulenc uses time signature changes as sectional transitions. From the A to B sections (ms. 8-9) the change from 7/8 to 4/4 creates an abrupt halt in the musical line. The clarinet quasi-cadenza in measure 20 (Ex 3.7) serves as the transition from B-A 1, this polymeter shift to 4/4 creates unease. Once again, Poulenc has used modern techniques within a classical form.

Measure 20 (Ex 3.7) is a written out quasi cadenza for the Clarinet leaving the focus once again on the clarinet as the lead voice of the movement.

---

The melody is repeated several times with the use of grace notes in bar 25 (Ex. 3.8) as one of the few variations from the first statement.

The bassoon accompaniment ostinato also remains constant except beats two through four of measure 27 (Ex. 3.9) where an ascending motion rather than descending is used, unlike the rest of the movement.

The use of two different articulations in the bassoon also helps to create interest in the accompaniment line. Poulenc uses the juxtaposition of completely tongued patterns in the bassoon under the smooth legato melody in the clarinet (Ex. 3.10) to create a timbre quality that will later become one of his trademarks. The Romance employs the sound quality and timbre of the bassoon and clarinet in their respective registers to create a lush reed sound reminiscent of Brahms or Tchaikovsky’s symphonic works, a sound that is full but also tranquil.
The third movement, Final, is marked *très anime* with the half note at 112. The opening of the movement harkens back to the baroque period in feel but is tonally of the 20th century. The clarinet once again takes the lead while the bassoon accompanies with a busy basso continuo like line in D Phrygian. Overall the Final is less chaotic than the first movement but still imbued with a comic wit. “Poulenc deftly captured the 18th century’s ironic cutting humor in order, incisively, to criticize his culture…”

The movement is a total of 105 bars, longer than the previous two movements combined, much like Koechlin’s Trio, op. 92. The use of grace notes in the clarinet and later in the bassoon adds to the wittiness of the movement and helps to bring the movements of the piece together overall. Measure 41 (Ex. 3.11) is the only instance in the piece where the bassoon has the solo melody, which is then joined in imitative counterpoint by the clarinet in measure 45.

---

In bar 57 (B section) the music of the second movement returns creating a cyclic feel to the piece and an overall cohesiveness that up until this moment had been lacking (Ex 3.12). While the music is drawn from the second movement, it has an eerie and unsettling feel created by the use of a more chromatic line and unstable tonality.

The movement ends with an upward d minor scale, \textit{très vite}, followed by a cadential d major ending.

Of the three movements, the Final, upon first hearing, appears to be the clearest in classical treatment. Upon deeper investigation, the Final’s many modern traits begin to emerge. The movement begins in D Phrygian with the two voices in their assigned roles. The clarinet melody is ornamental and brash while the bassoon plays the iconic role of basso continuo bass line. This only lasts for a brief moment before the next melody fragment is introduced. Throughout the movement these fragmented melodies are altered and developed through mode
mixture and implied polymeter. The use of irregular phrases or irregular beats within a phrase adds to the Poulenc wit applied to the Final.

The use of imitative counterpoint that starts in measure 42 is shortly followed by the use of the octatonic scale in measures 48-56 and that appears again in measures 89-95. The classical inspiration seems to only exist to showcase the more modern techniques. Poulenc continued to employ silence as a transitional tool between sections and the bassoon uses all forms of ostinato in the Final. The two-note slurred cluster ostinato is found in measures 8-13 with the arpeggiated chord ostinato in measures 35-38. Lastly the four-note oscillation of chords ostinato is used in measure 57-64.

Formal Overview of Final Movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A’</th>
<th>coda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-56</td>
<td>57-69</td>
<td>70-82</td>
<td>83-106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Benjamin Ivry describes the Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon as a “two-way monologue as opposed to a dialogue, rather like a married couple, each with a conflicting version of an event.”\(^\text{136}\) This can be seen throughout the piece though it often seems that the clarinet has more of the dominating role in this marriage. Roger Nichols states that there are “passages of jazz and bitonality often leading to a mischievous cadence.”\(^\text{137}\) It is audibly clear that Poulenc was very influenced by the jazz sounds that were infiltrating the cabaret and popular music scenes of the time as well as the circus. Also, Poulenc’s use of instructed silences causing halts often in mid-phrase add to the already acidly witty feel of the piece. As a whole the Sonata can be heard as

\(^{136}\) Ivry, Benjamin. *Francis Poulenc*, p. 45.


Edited by Deane Root. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>
the sounds of Parisian life. With the opening movement, a curious child at the circus, the second movement a couple in love and the third movement a night out on the streets of Paris. “Poulenc possessed the ability to tap into the memories of French audiences, transporting them to an earlier era while at the same time, investing his music with a distinctly French sound with which his countrymen could identify even if they were not familiar with Parisian popular culture per se.”

**Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, op. 43**

Poulenc’s Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano had a long and tumultuous beginning. Poulenc’s first reference to the piece was in a letter to Paul Collaer in early 1923 stating that he had sketched a trio. In March of 1924 a letter to Armand Lunel (fn. 299) shows that Poulenc had begun work on the trio while the same was written to Milhaud in September of 1924. Letters from the autumn of 1924, to several people, affirm that the work had been finished and needed to be reworked. At this time, Poulenc’s work on the *Trio* was interrupted to set the “Poèmes de Ronsard.” A letter from November indicates work on the last movement of the Trio, which Poulenc described as, “an Italian allegro that I hope is brilliant and joyous.” By mid-January 1925 the *Trio* was still not completed and was dropped from two of Paul Collaer’s concerts on February 16 and March 16. In March of 1925 Poulenc had his last lessons with Koechlin.

At this time Poulenc’s work on the Trio halted due to an accident that occurred at the Amboise train Station. The train Poulenc was riding suddenly lurched forward causing Poulenc to force his right hand through a window, severing two tendons in his right thumb. After ten

---

138 St-Aubin, Charlène. *Francis Poulenc, Nostalgia and Parisian popular culture*, p. 246.  
139 Schmidt, Carl B. *Entrancing Muse: a Documented Biography of Francis Poulenc*, p. 141.  
140 Ibid., p. 142.  
141 Ibid., p. 148.
days in a Paris clinic, surgery and two months of recuperation, he was finally able to resume playing the piano and continue his composing. Only in the fall of 1925 did Poulenc finally return to his Trio, op. 43.\textsuperscript{142}

The printed Trio indicates that it was composed in Canes from February to April of 1926 though the work was continually revised until its premier on May 2, 1926 at the “Auric-Poulenc” concert at the Salle des Agricultures. Works from the program included \textit{Les Chansons Gaillardes} performed by Poulenc and Pierre Bernac, the premiere of Poulenc’s \textit{Napoli} by Marcelle Meyer and finally the premiere of the \textit{Trio} with Poulenc on piano, Roger Lamorlette on oboe and Gustave Dhérin on bassoon.\textsuperscript{143}

The influence of popular music was heard in the Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon through the language of the circus. With the Trio the songs of the music hall or \textit{chansons} are the more obvious influence. As discussed earlier, Poulenc was enamored with both the singers and song-writers of his time heard at Parisian music halls such as \textit{Folies Bergère} and \textit{Scala}. One influential chanteuse of note was Damia, known as “la tragédienne de la chanson” she sang in the style of \textit{chanson réaliste}, of which she was the most famous performer until Edith Piaf. \textit{Chanson réaliste} dealt with the lives of disposed women. The melodies were beautiful and haunting while the accompaniment was often upbeat. The songs were often in triple meter with the feeling of a waltz. Damia’s music was accessible to all while speaking directly to the impoverished people of the early 1900’s. Damia’s more famous songs include \textit{Dis moi pourquoi} (1926), \textit{Le grand frisé} (1913) and \textit{Les Nocturnes} (1915). In \textit{Les Nocturnes} we find a wonderful example of several chanson traits also presents in the \textit{Trio}: an orchestral introduction, use of a

\textsuperscript{142} Schmidt, Carl B. \textit{Entrancing Muse: a Documented Biography of Francis Poulenc}, p. 148.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., p. 149.
triple meter with duple syncopations, arpeggiated chordal accompaniment and the use of rubato to emphasis text at key moments. Damia’s singing is rhythmic, often times spoken in a recitative fashion. She is declamatory while still musical, pushing and pulling the tempo to emphasis the words being sung.

The Trio like the Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon belongs to Poulenc’s first stage of chamber works but shows much more maturity with regard to harmony and handling of the instruments than the Sonata. It is “one of Poulenc’s first mature productions…an early model of his best qualities: balance, proportion, lyricism, humor, simplicity and clarity.”144 The Trio is dedicated to Manuel de Falla who was a dear friend of Poulene’s and also a Spanish composer who lived in Paris.

The Trio begins with an introduction marked Lent with the piano sounding chords in A Aeolian (Ex. 3.13).

![Example 3.13, Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, op. 43, mvt. 1, mm. 1-4](Copyright © 1926 Edition Wilhelm Hansen AS, Copenhagen Printed with permission)

The bassoon enters in bar five with an opening recitative-like statement marked *fortissimo and librement* (Ex. 3.14)

![Example 3.14, Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, op. 43, mvt. 1, mm. 1-9 in bassoon](Copyright © 1926 Edition Wilhelm Hansen AS, Copenhagen Printed with permission)

---

144 Ivry, Benjamin. *Francis Poulenc*, p. 62.
The oboe responds with the pickups to bar 10 (Ex 3.15), answering the question presented by the bassoon.

The piano then responds to both statements in bar 13. The oboe and bassoon enter together in bar 15, joining the piano and culminating in a trill that leads unexpectedly to the main subject at measure 17 (Ex. 3.16). The transition from the introduction to the A section is a harmonic shift from A Aeolian to A major through the E major chord found in the piano.

This 16-bar introduction may be viewed in many different ways; Benjamin Ivry describes it “as if three card players are sadly telling each other tales of woe (Poulenc was a bridge addict).” Ivy also states that the bassoon and oboe call and response can be seen as a variation on the military taps with the piano “elliptical chords [that] anticipate the jazz style of Duke Ellington.” Wilfrid Mellers expresses a different opinion in observing that the four-part piano writing in Aeolian a minor, with the classically double-dotted theme in bassoon that is answered by the oboe in b-flat minor, is joined by dominant 9th chords in the piano, chords that lead to A minor and are then followed by “baroque roulades” in the oboe and bassoon. Wilfrid Mellers’ description would lead to the observation that Poulenc was following a neoclassical form for the Trio. St-Aubin’s discussion of the chanson has an alternative explanation for the Trio’s

---

146 Ibid., p. 62.
introduction, “Another common element of the song of the turn of the century was the four- or eight- measure instrumental introduction which was then used as a ritornello to indicate the return of the verse following the chorus.”\(^{148}\) Poulenc could have looked no further than the music hall to find inspiration for the introduction, which does return later in the movement. While much of Poulenc’s music may well be described as neoclassical, his use of popular style chanson or music of the bal musette creates music with a unique character. Ivy finds that “This stylistic mix is an important element in the bittersweet quality of Poulenc’s secular works.”\(^{149}\)

The opening introduction serves to capture the attention of the audience and introduce the instruments. This preface is highly characterized, a fine example of Poulenc’s early chamber music style. The use of the dotted rhythms paired with the 32\(^{nd}\) and 64\(^{th}\) note flourishes add to the excess that will be on display throughout the piece. A feeling of longing as well as triumph in the introduction is conveyed. These two sentiments are then employed throughout the piece, causing the introduction to become a prelude to the entire piece and not just the first movement.

The Presto section begins at measure 17 (Ex. 3.16) in a surprising presto with all three instruments playing an active and equal role. The written articulations are very important as with all of Poulenc's music. Special attention must be given to marked articulations or the music dies under the sheer weight of the texture. According to Benjamin Ivry, Poulenc stated the first movement follows the model of a Haydn Allegro.\(^ {150}\) In measure 17 beat two of the piano, the “wrong note” idea is heard once again. The C natural creates an interval of a minor 3\(^{rd}\), implying a minor which quickly resolves to A major. The Trio is neoclassic in style with the

\(^{148}\) St-Aubin, Charlène. *Francis Poulenc, Nostalgia and Parisian popular culture*, p. 155.

\(^{149}\) Stringer, Mary Ann. *Diversity as Style in Poulenc’s Chamber works with Piano*, p. 39.

\(^{150}\) Ivry, Benjamin. *Francis Poulenc*, p. 63.
“...exploitation of the A major/minor duality, in the incorporation of Baroque dotted rhythms and in various melodic gestures.”

The movement can be broken down into four main sections. The introduction, bars 1-16, the A section, bars 17-160, the B section, bars 161-191 and then the return of the A section, bars 192-end. The form turns out to be a fast-slow-fast ternary with a slow introduction. The presto subject remains in A major with some brief tonicizations until measure 103 (Ex. 3.17) where there is a drastic shift to F minor.

Example 3.16, Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, op. 43, mvt. 1, mm. 11-26 in full score
Copyright © 1926 Edition Wilhelm Hansen AS, Copenhagen Printed with permission

151 Stringer, Mary Ann. Diversity as Style in Poulenc’s Chamber works with Piano, p. 77.
In this F minor section the oboe begins a lyrical, soaring melodic line with the bassoon playing secco staccato notes underneath (Ex. 3.18).

By measure 112, the bassoon has joined the oboe with the melody and even takes over in bar 116 but is once again rejoined by the oboe for the climatic moment of this section in bar 120 (Ex. 3.19). Throughout this section the piano cycles through two of the ostinato patterns; two measures of broken chords followed by two measures of the 2 note slurs.
The second key change occurs at bar 147 (Ex. 3.20) with a shift from f minor to F major, with a pedal point of F in the left hand along with the major tonic triads in the right hand of the piano solidifying this key shift. The mood of the piece changes along with the key, as the relentless staccato accompaniment from the bassoon is replaced with a soft trill and the oboe melodic jumps have morphed into a simple scalar melody (Ex. 3.20)
The release of tension continues with the transition to the B section, led by the bassoon in bar 160 (Ex. 3.21). The B section is marked le double plus lent (half the speed) and begins with a bassoon solo consisting of the pitches e, f and g.

The oboe interrupts on the upbeat of beat one in measure 164 with a trill followed by an upward sweeping e major scale that leads to the main melody of the B section which begins in bar 165 (Ex. 3.22).

The B section melody is slow and lyrical, hinting at the music of the second movement but also reminiscent of the chanson réaliste. The culmination of this beautiful melody is found in measure 173 (Ex. 3.23) when all three instruments sound the melody in octaves marked forte and très expressif.
Following this full-voiced melodic assertion the music slowly winds down until the bassoon enters with the pick-up to measure 185 (Ex. 3.24), repeating the music first heard in measure four but now played a step-and-a-half lower, a procedure much like the ritornello found in chansons as described with regard the introduction of the Trio.

The oboe joins with the opening motive in bar 187 (Ex. 3.25) but with the piano continuing the B section melody underneath these interruptions.

The E major chord at bar 191 (Ex. 3.26) has a cadential feeling to it but just as in the beginning of the movement, Poulenc surprises the audience by returning to the opening Presto music in A major as heard in measure 17. An effect which Wilfrid Mellers describes as “rococo crossed with
Offenbachian opéra bouffe.\textsuperscript{152} Poulenc’s use of the chanson music in the B section is bookended by the A neoclassical sections and through this juxtaposition Poulenc’s wit begins to show. This wit is also found in the use of classical form and sound as a bridge into and out of popular music of Poulenc’s lifetime, looking to the past while moving forward with the present. “…in the Trio we find a perfect example of how Poulenc dealt with his natural romanticism by deflecting it into irony and parody.”\textsuperscript{153}

The coda section begins at measure 220 (Ex. 3.27) and hints back to the B section melody, accented rather than legato.

\textsuperscript{153}Stringer, Mary Ann. \textit{Diversity as Style in Poulenc’s Chamber works with Piano}, p. 77.
The movement ends with a whirlwind of accented upbeats in A major. Wilfrid Mellers feels that with the movement overall, “Gluck, that catalyst between baroque and rococo, is the presiding spirit…”\textsuperscript{154} though the influence of the chansons of the music hall are also heard throughout. The movement is moving, evocative and creates a narrative between the three voices. The melody used throughout the movement will return and be expanded upon in ensuing movements. With the opening movement Poulenc has introduced and invited the audience to partake in a whirlwind of sounds and colors created within the Trio as a whole.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Intro</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A’</th>
<th>coda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>1-16</td>
<td>17-160</td>
<td>161-191</td>
<td>192-219</td>
<td>220-228</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second movement, Andante, is marked \textit{andante con motto} with the eighth note at 84 so that the feeling is more in 4/8 than 2/4. Ivry has stated that Poulenc’s Trio is a “conversation style piece” full of elegant symmetries\textsuperscript{155} and the second movement is an example of such things being “melodically vocal in idiom and pianistically luxuriant.”\textsuperscript{156} The piano opens the movement presenting an introduction to the main melody with a lush 16\textsuperscript{th} note accompaniment (Ex. 3.28). The bassoon enters in bar five with the main melody of the second movement, accompanied by the piano in continual 16\textsuperscript{th} notes. The melody of the second movement is fore shadowed in the first movement during the B section but the second movement melody is more lush and romantic, with the use of dense chords in the piano creating an impassioned sound that only intensifies throughout the movement.

\textsuperscript{155}Ivry, Benjamin. \textit{Francis Poulenc}, p. 63.
The oboe joins the piano with an upward scalar pickup to bar nine, reminiscent of the first movement presto. The oboe and bassoon sound the melody in octaves before the oboe uses the upward pickup to take over the melody in bar 11 only to have the bassoon finish the thought in measure 12, with an oboe after thought in bars 13 and 14 (Ex. 3.29).

This seamless passing of melody through all voices will continue for the entirety of the movement. In the next four measures the bassoon serves as a transition from the opening key of b-flat to what appears to be C major but heavily tonicized. The melodic exchange between oboe and bassoon continues throughout the C major section but the piano ostinato changes somewhat. The first example of this change is in bar 22 (Ex. 3.30) with the right hand of the piano including
grace note upper neighbors that embellish the downward scale that with the addition of the grace notes becomes an octatonic scale. Poulenc also uses the octatonic scale as the transition into the B section of the modified ternary form of the movement.

This is reminiscent of the bassoon transition from the fast A section to slow B section in the first movement and also seems to harken back to the grace note figures in the clarinet melody of the first and last movements of the Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon.

The first appearance of staccato notes in the piano are found in measures 23-25 (Ex. 3.31), adding short octave embellishments to the legato melody of the oboe and bassoon.

The same staccatos are then used in measure 30, found in the right hand of the piano over major chords in 16\textsuperscript{th} notes and juxtaposed against the seventh of the chords in a legato line in the left hand. The octatonic scale is seen once again in measure 30, a modern technique employed against the more romantic melody. The staccato notes increase the tension that is leading to the climatic arrival of the melody in measure 35 with all three voices marked triple forte and \textit{très lié} (Ex. 3.32).
Rather than relaxing, the music becomes frantic and even more passionate starting with the bassoon in measure 38 (Ex. 3.32) and continues until measure 45 where the melody, marked *très doux* (very soft), slowly floats to an F major chord on the down beat of measure 52 (Ex 3.33). The chord found in the piano in measure 51, the Tristan chord, adds a mystical sound to the penultimate measure of the resolution found in measure 52. The octatonic scale found in measures 52-55 furthers the mystical and experimental quality of the sound and harmonic complexity.
At this point it sounds as if a reprisal of the first section will begin but instead Poulenc begins a coda. The oboe and bassoon pass the melody gently back and forth with the piano returning to the 16th note accompaniment slowly working its way from F major to f minor with the movement ending in a whispered f minor chord (Ex. 3.34). Fragments of melodies flow together, ultimately culminating in a slow disembodiment of the sound with the end of the movement.

The movement consists of several themes that are fragmented and altered and while less sectionalized than the first movement, it still follows a modified ternary form. The first movement was deeply rooted in the neoclassical style while the second movement is more in line with the popular chanson style of the music hall. The chanson melody set against a lush accompaniment piano line shows Poulenc’s romantic treatment of his melodies.
Formal Overview of Second Movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>1-22</td>
<td>23-51</td>
<td>52-64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rondo, the third and final movement has been compared to the form of the Scherzo from Saint-Saëns’ Piano Concerto, no. 2.\textsuperscript{157} and is described as a gigue in D-flat major.\textsuperscript{158} With regard to key centers, Wilfrid Mellers believes that there is a direct correlation between the keys of all three movements. The D-flat major of the third movement may be seen as the lower mediant to the second movement F major and an upper mediant to the first movement’s A major.\textsuperscript{159} The movement is marked \textit{très vif} and should be performed at the recommended dotted quarter equal to 138-144. If the movement is performed any slower it loses all of the forward momentum and vitality written in by Poulenc. Mellers states that “the movement has affinities with a baroque French gigue, with an Offenbachian gallop in the lurid footlights of a Second Empire theatre, and- in the tight, Stravinskian coda- with the acerbity of post-war Paris.”\textsuperscript{160} The movement has the eclectic mix of styles as described in the discussion of the circus influence on the Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon, but is approached in a more mature style in the Trio.

The movement begins with a piano introduction of three bars which is then joined by the oboe and bassoon with the dry, staccato melody (Ex 3.35).

\textsuperscript{157} Ivry, Benjamin. \textit{Francis Poulenc}, p. 63.
\textsuperscript{158} Mellers, Wilfrid. \textit{Francis Poulenc}, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., p. 15.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., p. 15.
The use of the piano introduction has been a theme throughout this work and will also be seen later in Poulenc’s Sextet from 1932-1939. The articulations are once again clearly marked and very important, not allowing much room for personnel interpretation by the performer, much like the works of Koechlin. By using specific directions through articulation and dynamic markings, directions written to the performers and overall directions for the pieces both composers dictate how the music should be approached and ultimately sound. This strict adherence to detail, when performed, brings out characteristics attributed to Poulenc’s early chamber music. The melody is passed back and forth as in the previous movements, though in this third movement the bassoon and oboe operate as one entity, handing the melody as one unit to the piano. The staccato melody continues until measure 36 where the oboe enters with a legato melody marked *très chanté* (Ex 3.36).

Example 3.35, Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, op. 43 mvt. 3, mm. 1-7
Copyright © 1926 Edition Wilhelm Hansen AS, Copenhagen Printed with permission

Example 3.36, Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, op. 43, mvt. 3, mm. 36-38 in oboe
Copyright © 1926 Edition Wilhelm Hansen AS, Copenhagen Printed with permission
This melody is abruptly interrupted by the bassoon in measure 46 with an accented interjection accompanied by an irregular group of seven eighth notes in the piano (Ex 3.37).

Example 3.37, Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, op. 43, mvt. 1, mm. 43-48
Copyright © 1926 Edition Wilhelm Hansen AS, Copenhagen Printed with permission

This same interruption is repeated in bars 50 and 51. The use of irregular beats in a measure is a device often used by Poulenc; here he uses the irregularity to disrupt the flow of the melody’s path through the three voices. Poulenc does not allow moments to be strictly neoclassical for too long, there is often a “wrong note” or an abrupt silence that interrupts the neoclassical technique. This idea of an “interruption” is truly one of Poulenc’s trademarks.

Measures 76-82 serve as a transition to the B section, which begins in measure 83. The music of the transition is based on the original motive played in the piano (Ex 3.38).

Example 3.38, Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, op. 43, mvt. 3, mm. 76-77
Copyright © 1926 Edition Wilhelm Hansen AS, Copenhagen Printed with permission
The abrupt change to written C major may be seen as a surprising shift when compared to the D flat major key of the seven-measure transition (Ex 3.39) but Poulenc uses this chromatic shift as a harmonic transition rather than a developmental section.

Example 3.39, Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, op. 43, mvt. 3, mm. 82-83
Copyright © 1926 Edition Wilhelm Hansen AS, Copenhagen Printed with permission

Poulenc often uses junctures such as this in his music to surprise the audience and keep them engaged. His music does not move where the ear expects it to but rather shifts to somewhere distant and incredibly interesting.

The B section consists of a very dry bassoon line pinned against a legato melodic oboe line with the piano playing the role of choral accompaniment, moving through several ostinato patterns. The oboe line of the B section is reminiscent of the melody from measures 36-41. Measures 130-133 are rhythmically the same as measures 60-63 but harmonically raised a half step. The piano leads the transition from the B section back to the A section in measure 141-142 (Ex. 3.40) by using an A-flat major minor seven chord as a pivot point back to the tonic D-flat in measure 143.
The 5/8 time signature change in measure 164 causes a hic-up in the melody that is followed by another intrusion from the bassoon in measure 165. The melodic quality of the second movement returns in measure 171 (Ex. 3.41) found in the second beat of the piano and continues with a sweeping melody joined by the oboe in measures 175.

This melody is first seen in the first movement measures 147-151 (Ex. 3.20) and repeated in measures 219-221 (Ex. 3.27). This quotation lasts in the third movement from measures 171-179 (Ex. 3.41). By quoting music of the first movement, in the character of the second movement, Poulenc has created a full cyclic moment in the piece. This is also the beginning of the coda, which Poulenc uses to tie all three movements together.
The coda continues in the flowing style of the second movement until the bassoon interrupts with
the original staccato third movement motive (Ex. 3.42).

Measure 198 begins the final culmination of the piece with a sudden time signature
change to 2/4 causing a shift from triple to duple and feels quite French in a militaristic vein (Ex.
3.43).

It also seems as if the oboe and bassoon are finishing the conversation started in the first
movement, while the piano is now only adding interjections. The movement seems to collapse
upon itself with a tongue in cheek d-flat chord, the oboe and bassoon in their lower registers and
a pedal d-flat in the left hand of the piano (Ex. 3.44).
The form of the movement is a rondo as the title implies though it could also be seen as a rondo variant in ternary form. Seen this way, all three movements of the Trio would be in ternary form, “Poulenc…made frequent reference to traditional forms or balanced, closed structures to articulate contemporary experience…[Poulenc] tended to use such forms as external “molds” finding…new means of development within them.”¹⁶¹ The use of neoclassic form and style of the first and third movements are seen as bridges into and out of the romantic second movement. Perhaps this may also be seen as a metaphor of Poulenc’s musical style, looking to and from the past to influence the present.

Overall, Poulenc’s Trio while chronologically still in the first period of his compositions, shows much maturity and thought compared to his Duo Sonata. Though commonalties between the two works; the structural form employed, overt use of articulations and dynamics and the use of silence. The use of surprising shifts in both key and feel add to the wittiness of the music, a quality that would become a mainstay of Poulenc’s music and could also be said, of French music of the time. Throughout the Trio the influence of popular Parisian entertainment is

presented through stylistic allusion of chansons of the early 1900’s. “By adopting the unique performance practices of the popular performers of the period to his own musical language, Poulenc gave a number of his works a popular aesthetic.”¹⁶² This piece, while standard in the repertoire for double reeds, should also become a more prominent fixture in the chamber music repertoire of pianists.

Formal Overview of Rondo Movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A’</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>A’’</th>
<th>coda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>1-35</td>
<td>36-75</td>
<td>76-82</td>
<td>83-142</td>
<td>142-171</td>
<td>172-212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sextet for Piano, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon and Horn, op. 100**

Poulenc’s Sextet is dedicated to George Salles who was a curator of Asian Art at the Louvre and later director of the Musees de France. Poulenc and Salles were close friends and Poulenc often lodged with Salles before he procured his own apartment in France.¹⁶³ The Sextet, along with the Trio, is one of Poulenc’s most well-known and often performed pieces for woodwinds. The official first public premiere of the Sextet was at La Sérénade on December 13, 1933. After this premiere Poulenc decided that the piece needed to be reworked and a revised edition was premiered on December 9, 1940 at an Association Musicale Contemporaine concert.

Much like the Trio, the Sextet follows a ternary form with each movement a mix of neoclassical and popular chanson music. Unlike the Trio, the Sextet more often employs

¹⁶² St-Aubin, Charlène. *Francis Poulenc, Nostalgia and Parisian popular culture*, p. 126.
¹⁶³ Schmidt, Carl B. *Entrancing Muse*, p. 485.
experimental compositional techniques. While the Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon and Trio were part of Poulenc’s first group of chamber works, the Sextet belongs to the middle or second group; comprised of the Sextet, Sonata for Violin and Piano, Sonata for Cello and Piano, Suite Française and Trios Movements Perpétuels. Poulenc’s chamber music of this period shares many of the same traits of the previous period but is more refined and polished. The humor, wit and mischievousness still abound though there is a greater sense of melancholy in the works of the second period. At this point in Poulenc’s compositional life he had finished lessons with Koechlin, and been a part of the formation and later dissolution of Les Six. He has grieved the death of his friend and mentor Erik Satie (who died in 1925) and had also seen his music used for the political gain of others. Through all of these experiences, Poulenc continued to grow as a composer, with the Sextet being one example of the maturity seen in his middle period of chamber works.

The first movement is toccata like with “a Stravinskian classicism to the fore,”164 as Benjamin Ivry has written. It is ternary in form with the A, fast section from bar 6 to bar 111. The first five measures of the movement serve as an introduction, much like the first movement of Poulene’s Trio. “The upward-sweeping scales in the introduction pay homage to the French heroic idiom,”165 according to Wilfrid Mellers (Ex. 3.45).

---

165 Mellers, Wilfrid. Francis Poulenc, p. 47.
As with the Trio, the five-measure introduction can been seen as a flourish to grab the audience’s attention before the first motive is heard. Unlike the Trio, the Sextet introduction is full of wit, as is seen in the syncopation and flutter tongue of the flute, foreshadowing the overall theme of the piece.

The main motive of the A section is first heard in measures six through ten (Ex. 3.46). The motive is two-part with each section consisting of two measures. The first section is played by the flute, oboe and bassoon, which are then answered by the clarinet. (Measures 6 and 7) The second half of the motive is stated by the flute, oboe and bassoon (measures 8-9).

This question and answer motive is heard throughout the A section but with differing articulations for the second half of the motive with each hearing. Poulenc uses differing articulations to punctuate the musical phrases and, by doing so each time the motive is heard, Poulenc has created a different sound for each motive. This in turn creates interest in what could
otherwise become a dull and redundant motive. The instruments and articulations used for each entrance of the second half of the motive are seen in the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Articulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Flute, oboe, bassoon</td>
<td>Staccatos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Clarinet, oboe, bassoon</td>
<td>No articulation mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Oboe and bassoon</td>
<td>Tenudos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Clarinet and bassoon</td>
<td>Accents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>186</td>
<td>Flute and oboe</td>
<td>Accents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>203</td>
<td>Flute, oboe and bassoon</td>
<td>Accents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1

Poulenc also uses the differing articulations in place of developing the A motive. Within each of the works by Poulenc presented in this paper, a true developmental section does not exist. Much like Koechlin and several other French composers of the time, Poulenc did not employ the sonata-allegro form in his works. This avoidance was purposeful, since the use of sonata-allegro form is often found in the large-scale symphonic works of German composers, the antithesis of the “French” sound and political climate of the time. Rather than full developmental sections, Poulenc rather freely uses three main compositional techniques according to Mary Ann Stringer.

1. “Sequential restatement of material”
2. “restating [a] theme with changes of intervallic structure, meter, rhythm and phrase length.”
3. “melodic fragmentation”\(^{166}\)

---

\(^{166}\) Stringer, Mary Ann. *Diversity as Style in Poulenc’s Chamber works with Piano*, p. 35.
In the Sextet Poulenc uses all three of these techniques but employs the third most frequently to “pad the areas between thematic statements”\textsuperscript{167} as seen in measure 111 (Ex. 3.47). Along with the motive described earlier, the A section contains continuous key shifts, never settling on one tonic center. With the unclear tonal center and an unending exchange of motives, there is a feeling of organized chaos, as if the music is on the edge of imploding at any time. There is also a clearer jazz influence heard through the use of syncopations and articulations, an influence that was not heard in the Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon or Trio.

The melodic fragments move ahead incessantly as if searching for the correct ending but only discovering more fragments until the abrupt halt in measure 110. The bassoon is suddenly left alone sustaining an f sharp in the tenor range of the instrument. The chaos of the A section morphs into a sea of longing led by the solo bassoon in the transition to the B section (Ex. 3.47). The use of solo bassoon as a bridge to the B section is reminiscent of the first movement of the Trio.

Example 3.47, Sextet for Piano, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon and Horn, op. 100, mvt. 1, mm. 111-118

The B section begins in measure 120 as the piano enters with the first motive rooted in A flat major (Ex. 3.48).

Example 3.48, Sextet for Piano, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon and Horn, op. 100, mvt. 1, mm. 119-121

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., 35.
In the B section Poulenc once again uses lyricism to replace a development section, seen also in the first movement of the *Trio*. As the piano begins an eight-measure introduction we are transported to a smoky music hall, listening to a chanson sung by Damia or the not yet famous Edith Piaf. The oboe begins a mournful melody, accompanied by bassoon and clarinet in half notes (Ex. 3.49).

Example 3.49, Sextet for Piano, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon and Horn, op. 100, mvt. 1, mm. 125-128

The melody is continually passed, fragments once again searching for partners, but now within a *chanson réaliste* style melody. Poulenc employs several of the techniques described in the introduction including flutter tongue, use of extreme range and articulations. During the introduction to this movement, these devices were used to convey energy while in the B section they intensify the sorrow found in the melody of the piano. In measure 143 the use of the two-note ostinato in the piano continues to escalate the tension until measure 165 when the ostinato morphs into a cluster based on C-sharp, D and G that becomes a four-note ostinato. The movement unravels culminating in a fortissimo bassoon solo outlining a B-flat triad against the non-tonal clusters in the piano that have shifted to B-flat, C-sharp and F-sharp. The B section comes to an end in complete silence as indicated by a fermata bar line.

The fast, A section returns in measure 184 after the halted silence of the fermata bar line at the end of the B section. Poulenc’s use of silence harkens back to the Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon and its reference to the circus orchestra using silence to create anticipation, seen as an influence here as well. Poulenc uses the silence of the fermata to settle the tension heard in the B
The return of the A section at first appears to be a true restatement but up a fourth from the original motive. Measures 184-204 are almost identical to measures 6-26. In true Poulenc form, measure 205 begins new fragments shattering the full restatement of the A section. Neoclassical forms do not exist for long in Poulenc’s music before the avant-garde intrudes. The new fragments culminate on a triple forte from all instruments with a pitch cluster of g-sharp, d, f and a. Once again a fermata bar line is found, increasing the anticipation of a new section or a return to the B section but instead the coda begins.

The coda begins in measure 222 based on the melodic fragments found in both sub sections of the A section with the fragments pitted against each other until measure 248. Reminiscent of the introduction, the movement ends with scalar flourishes heard in the piano. While the scalar flourish in the introduction move harmonically from a to g sharp, measure 248 to the end moves harmonically from g sharp to a minor. The theme is augmented with an additional measure and additional beat added to the last measure. The silence heard in the
introduction is filled in the ending by the horn. Poulenc’s use of mirroring the introduction within the closing creates a closed off cohesiveness to the movement, a technique that was not seen in the previous two works. The piano final scalar flourish leads to an a major chord with an added d that resolves to a unison A in all instruments spanning four octaves, punctuating the end of the whirlwind first movement.

Formal Overview of First Movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>1-71</td>
<td>72-119</td>
<td>120-165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>166-183</td>
<td>184-221</td>
<td>222-250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second movement is also classical in form with a slow-fast-slow ternary structure, the inverted shape of the first movement. While compared to the first movement, the second movement is slower, but not as reflectively slow as that of the *Trio*, with the tempo marking being Andantino (quarter note equals 60). The movement begins strongly in D-flat major with the oboe introducing the main melody along with piano accompaniment, which is then joined by the bassoon in measure three creating the texture and feel of the Trio (Ex. 3.51).
Unlike the Trio Poulenc does not begin the second movement of the Sextet with a piano introduction. The opening feels almost as if the audience has started listening late, missing the introduction. The second movement could be regarded as a continuation of the slow B section from the first movement. It seems fitting that the rest of the movement consists of fragmented melodies woven together by piano accompaniment, never settling on a clear beginning or ending. The movement as a whole is much more optimistic and flirtatious than the other examples of Poulenc’s lyrical writing presented. Poulenc’s accompanimental writing shows much maturity throughout this movement. The use of half-note chords over the melodic fragments in measures 9-10 creates a stillness and simplicity that is elegantly haunting. In the opening A section, non-piano accompaniment voices play an equal role to the melody in moving the energy forward while still creating tranquility.

The B section begins in measure 19 (Ex. 3.52) marked *le double plus vite*, with the eighth note equaling the sixteenth of the previous section. The bassoon serves as the transition into the B section as in the first movement.
The B section’s rhythmic carefree melody is reminiscent of the songs of Maurice Chevalier and pushes forward with frivolity and light heartedness until measure 65. The slower lyrical melody found in the beginning returns in measure 47 (Ex. 3.53), heard in the oboe while the piano continues the lively, rhythmic motive of the B section creating a hybrid a/b moment reminiscent of Koechlin’s Sonata for Bassoon.

The end of measure 64 contains a marked breath for all instruments at the end of a two-measure chord marked forte. The silence of the breath is then followed by all voices marked piano except
for the solo in the horn marked mezzo piano. The horn solo begins the slow transformation of
the B melody into the A melody which resumes at measure 77.

The A melody finally returns in all parts in measure 77 (Ex. 3.54) where the tempo also
abruptly returns to that of the opening, once again using the bassoon as the transitional voice.
Unlike the motive found in the opening, the main motive is heard in the clarinet and French horn,
rather than the oboe and bassoon. Throughout this section Poulenc pairs the register and
dynamics of each instrument to create points of high intensity and sudden drops of sound,
cultivating wit and humor through the pairing of the instruments.

Example 3.54, Sextet for Piano, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon and Horn, op. 100, mvt. 2, mm. 77-78

The A prime section consists of similar melodic fragments of the previous A section but
heard in different voices. The coda begins in measure 86 with the melody in the upper voices
(flute, clarinet and later oboe) and the use of 32\textsuperscript{nd} notes continuing the wit heard in the opening A
section. The piano continues the almost hypnotic 16\textsuperscript{th} note accompaniment until measure 90
where Poulenc employs the octatonic scale creating an abrupt mystical end to the movement (Ex.
3.55).
The third and final movement titled Finale is marked *prestissimo* and begins with *fortissimo*, harsh grace notes, awakening the audience from the warm, drunkenness of the slow chanson style second movement (Ex 3.56).

Formally the movement is a variation on a rondo, though it may also be viewed as ternary, much like the Finale of the *Trio*. While rooted in a neoclassical form, Poulenc has created a collage of motivic fragments lifted out of the previous two movements, juxtaposed with solo motives for each instrument. As Benjamin Ivy stated, “The interest of the work is not its slightly altered
classical framework, but rather the heartfelt romantic melodies which Poulenc hung on this bare-bones structure.”

Stringer posits that the Finale consists of three styles of melody fragmentation, cabaret, romantic and 20th century. Below are examples of each style.

![Example 3.57, Cabaret, measures 19-20 in french horn]

Example 3.57, Cabaret, measures 19-20 in french horn

![Example 3.58, Romantic, measures 26-30 in oboe]

Example 3.58, Romantic, measures 26-30 in oboe

![Example 3.59, 20th century, measures 81-84 in clarinet.]

Example 3.59, 20th century, measures 81-84 in clarinet.

Stinger also cites specific examples in the music to show how the three melodic fragments fit into the movement as a whole.

- Cabaret: measures 7-26, 73-80, 164-167
- Romantic: measures 27-68, 92-158
- 20th century: measures 80-91, 174-225

With this as a template, we can see how Poulenc’s melodies dictate form; here Poulenc has used the three styles of fragmentation to create the rondo form. Poulenc once again takes a classical form and employs his own French melodic and harmonic techniques and by doing so creates wit. In Poulenc’s music a nod to the past is always accompanied by a wink to the present.

---

170 Ibid., p. 101.
The movement begins with an introduction reminiscent of the introduction to the first movement. Within this introduction a motive is found in the eighth notes of the horn and the chromatic fragment of the piano. While the motive appears to only introduce the movement it will actually be used at each transitional juncture in the movement. The “cabaret” melody begins in measure 7 and continues with melodies reminiscent of the A section of the first movement, until measure 25 where the transition motive leads to the “romantic” melody beginning in measure 27. The “romantic” melody is also similar to the melody heard in the B section of movement one. The accompaniment in the piano begins an incessant four-note ostinato pattern that churns, driving the energy of the section forward in an unsettling manner. The “wrong note” idea is heard in the flute in measure 62. Measure 70 brings a needed two-beat silence to the piano while the transition motive leads back to the “cabaret” melody. It seems as though Poulenc is mirroring the first movement but this does not last. The first appearance of the “20th century” melody is found in measure 81, following a one-measure eighth-note transition motive from the french horn but without the piano chromatic line. The “20th century” motive is similar to the music of the coda found in the first movement. In light of Stringer’s notion of style fragmentation and the melodic allusion to the first movement, a sense of cohesiveness is created while a strong bond to popular idioms of the time can also be felt.

The “20th century” melody is short lived, however: the flute sounds the transition motive in measure 91 followed by the piano chromatic line into the return of the “romantic” melody in measure 92. The second B section continues until measure 158 where the chromatic transition motive of the piano is augmented into a six-measure transition leading back into the “cabaret” section once again. The “20th century” melody soon interrupts, reminiscent of the transition from the B to A prime sections of the first movement, all leading to the coda which Stringer
classifies as still “20th century,” which is fitting as it previously alluded to the coda of the first movement. The melodic fragmentation continues until it is interrupted in measure 200. The chaos of the ensemble comes to an abrupt halt as the bassoon emerges unaccompanied with a solo reminiscent of the transitional solo found in the first movement. The solo of the third movement is two octaves lower than the first movement, showcasing the range of the bassoon (ex. 3.60).

The rest of the ensemble reenters in pairs, continuing the 20th century melody fragments, though more lyrical in style than the earlier fragments (Ex 3.61). The piano accompanies with minor chords over a simple melodic bass.

The movement continues this pattern until measure 216 where the melody is finally heard in the piano as a solo voice. Poulenc’s use of oscillating thirds in the remaining voices creates the chordal accompaniment previously heard in the piano. This rare example of ensemble voice exchange has been absent until measure 217 (Ex 3.62).
The 6/4 time signature shift in measure 223 creates an irregular hic-up leading to the massive C major chord that ends the movement (Ex 3.63).

The movement feels less circus-like than the first movement and more influenced by the revues presented at the Folies Bergères. By the mid 1920’s the Folies Bergères music hall was presenting the biggest names in French entertainment as well as full scale, completely over the top revues, which were attended by the working class as well as the bourgeoisie of Paris.
The maturity of Poulenc’s compositional process is seen through a polished presentation of his trademark compositional techniques. The use of ostinato in the piano is expounded upon by chromaticism while still rooted in the realm of diatonicism. Mary Ann Stinger’s styles of melodic fragmentation provide a clear blueprint for a variation on a rondo while the allusion to melodies of the first movement seems to fit a ternary form. Though Poulenc’s use of the transition motive seems to solidify the form as a variation on a rondo.

With regard to the handling of melodic fragments, the Sextet displays a coherent integration that goes beyond the Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon as well as the Trio. By alluding to the melodies of the first movement, the third movement melodies have filled the void of a true developmental section. The use of the transition motive instead of silence showcases maturity in Poulenc’s approach to sectional transitions. Overall, the Sextet is more mature and cohesive than the earlier two pieces we have discussed. As Poulenc’s compositional techniques matured so did his stylistic allusions to popular entertainment of the time. Charlène St-Aubin states that with regard to popular music of his time, “…Poulenc was simply so familiar with the repertoire that he succeeded in creating his own popular Parisian musical language.”

The Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon, Trio and Sextet share a foundation of the past with a view of the present. As Charlène St-Aubin states, “His eclectic musical language demonstrates this ability to combine past and present, nostalgia and avant-garde.” The influences of popular entertainment are found in the stylistic allusions to the circus and the chansons heard in music halls. The performers and songwriters of the day were all influential on Poulenc’s compositional

---

171 St-Aubin, Charlène. *Francis Poulenc, Nostalgia and Parisian popular culture*, p. 126.
172 Ibid., p. 35.
style. By alluding to popular song, Poulenc bridges the gap between low-brow and high-brow art, achieving a cherished goal of many French composers of the time, including Koechlin.

Francis Poulenc was a master melodist; his melodies are memorable and singable, much like popular chanson, and his music is melody driven. The role of the melody is one common characteristic throughout the three pieces presented by Poulenc. Other shared compositional techniques include wide use of articulations as melodic punctuation, melodies that begin on an upbeat deliberately thwarting the sense of time, as well as the use of irregular time signatures or uneven measures in a phrase. These shared techniques are all employed to further Poulenc’s melodic lines.

With regard to form, Poulenc is rooted in the neoclassical style, often using a ternary or modified rondo form within his chamber works. The sonata-allegro form was frowned upon by most French composers of the time, including those who taught and studied at the Paris Conservatoire. This rebuke of the form had more to do with the turn away from Germanic influence on French music but also for the needs of the chamber style of the music that was being written. Within the three pieces discussed, Poulenc takes the neoclassical form and proceeds to employ his own devices to create the music.

The Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon, Trio and Sextet are all harmonically diatonic though there are brief moments of chromaticism, such as the use of the octatonic scale and non-tonal note clusters. As seen in all three pieces, Poulenc often employs an avant-garde technique within a strictly neoclassical treatment of the popular influenced melody. This mixture of styles is what conveys wit and humor, a classic trademark of Poulenc’s music. Other shared techniques of the three pieces presented are the “wrong note” idea, the role of the ostinato and Poulenc’s use
of sly notated silences. The last technique, the use of silence, evolved as Poulenc’s compositional style matured as well as the use of melodic fragmentation and cyclic motives.

The use of cyclic motivic fragments in the Sextet shows Poulenc’s informed treatment of French popular music and his own French aesthetic. Poulenc’s melodies, his attention to detail, and the influence of popular music are what create his trademark sound, one that evokes both wit and melancholy. This special neoclassical synthesis contributes much to the French sound of Poulenc’s music. In this respect, Charlène St-Aubin’s description of Poulenc is fitting, “Poulenc was an artist whose life revolved around Paris. His music was often described as French and…was highly influenced by an aesthetic rooted in Parisian and French heritage and culture. His constant references to all that is French in his music are proof of his patriotism, his deep love for his country’s traditions.”

---

173 St-Aubin, Charlène. Francis Poulenc, Nostalgia and Parisian popular culture, p.43.
Chapter Four: Afterward

“On the surface the two men were as different as chalk and cheese: the bearded, idealistic sage and devoted family man teaching the precocious, worldly and career-orientated homosexual….Yet underneath, both men were highly civilized liberal humanists, devoted to their craft and with a broad interest in the other arts”174

Koechlin and Poulenc’s lives intersected at a pivotal time. Throughout their lessons together, Koechlin never stifled Poulenc’s musical aesthetic. While Poulenc was studying harmony and counterpoint while using Bach chorales as a model, Koechlin encouraged Poulenc to compose as he wanted, to find his own artist voice. Koechlin felt that the rules of counterpoint could be broken, but only in the “interest of musicality and a modern adaptation of the spirit of the baroque.”175 Through their lessons together from 1921-1925, Poulenc not only learned counterpoint and harmony but also formed a meaningful bond with Koechlin. “Above all, Koechlin never restricted Poulenc’s individuality, but gave him the technical assurance he needed for his career to develop.”176 In a letter dated March 1929 Poulenc wrote to Koechlin as follows:

“I think of you often. You have planted within me a seed that I am doing my utmost to raise in the best possible way. I have read your treatises, which are marvelous. How many times when composing a bar of music have I not recalled the ‘too much movement’ or the ‘not enough’ from the time of our lessons.”177

174 Buckland, Sidney and Myriam Chimènes. Francis Poulenc, p. 41.
175 Ibid., p. 21.
176 Ibid., p. 41.
177 Ibid., p. 30.
In works by both Koechlin and Poulenc, several common techniques can be identified. One characteristic is the use of modes and modal mixture as a harmonic basis, about which Jim Samson notes that “The modalities associated with such national style confirmed the decline of traditional tonality while firmly resisting any inclinations towards atonality.” Another shared technique is a diverse and irregular rhythmic profile, often conveyed through an implied polymeter. Lastly, the common use of neoclassical traits that are imbued with humor and wit can be observed in both composers.

These traits are found in all six works that we have discussed. Neither composer was attracted to atonality. Both composers were looking to the past for formal and tonal inspiration. While Poulenc did use some modern experimental devices, such as the octatonic scale, both he and Koechlin were firmly rooted in tonality. There are moments of bitonality in both composers’ works but a tonal foundation remains. All six works could be classified as neoclassical in form but could also be labeled Romantic with regard to tonality. Yet above all, the six works discussed are identifiably French. They fit into the category of French neoclassicism, a much-needed alternative to the primitivist and expressionist music of the early 1910’s.

“Koechlin was very much a part of his era – a French bohemian not unlike many of his “la belle époque” contemporaries. His individualism did not alienate him from society; rather he was known, respected and loved by virtually all who knew him.” As a political advocate Koechlin used organizations such as the FMP to promote the ideals of the Popular Front in France. Koechlin used his position as president of the FMP to bring music back to attention of some popular groups in France. The FMP used music as a political statement, an avenue to

---


educate and inspire the working middle class of France. They stood against fascism and all the control associated with it. Koechlin’s attitude was generously open and strove towards principles of universality.

The three works we have considered by Koechlin, the Sonata for Bassoon and Piano, op. 71, Trio, op. 92 and Septuor d’Instruments à Vent, display in varying degrees the traits that are associated with his works as a whole. A linear polytonality that employs a mixture of modes, polyrhythmic complexities, open sonorities and the use of folk-like melodies are all hallmarks of Koechlin’s compositional style. Within the works, there is also much contrapuntal writing often in the style of Bach. The juxtaposition of polytonality within a Bach-like counterpoint creates a distinct sound to the music.

Koechlin’s music is deceptively simple and from a performers’ perspective the music is not technically but sonically demanding. A high level of musicianship and finesse are required to perform Koechlin’s music properly. Intonation and rhythmic integrity are tested to correctly achieve the open intervals and static melodies as a chamber group. As a nature mystic, Koechlin regarded music as something needed to help humans live more fully, seeking art as a cultural necessity. He believed that classical music should be widely accessible, especially to the working class. For Koechlin, French music was of the people and for the people. “His art embodied the child-like simplicity and freedom of Rousseau, the humor of Satie, the dreams of Jarry and the ambiguous language of Apollinaire…”

Keith Daniels has claimed that “…of the major 20th century French composers, Poulenc is the most explicit, and the most convincing in his use of Parisian popular music.” The works

---

we have examined by Francis Poulenc, the Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon, op. 32, Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, op. 43 and Sextet for Piano, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon and Horn, op.100 fit into the composer’s first and second of three chronological groups of chamber music. These three compositions reflect Poulenc’s growth and increasing maturity as a composer. For Poulenc, melody is elevated above all else, and sometimes assumes priority over principles of thematic development.

In Poulenc’s compositions we encounter several paradoxes and his work are often placed between the modern and the conventional.\textsuperscript{182} Stylistically his works push forward but still within neoclassical parameters. Harmonically his works are rooted in diatonic tonality. Modality and mode mixture often coexist with brief splashes of chromaticism, often employed when the work moves into the realm of the neoclassical. Poulenc employs neoclassical forms but proceeds to fill up his form with popular Parisian music of the time. Influenced by chansons and by the circus, the pieces discussed are invested with nostalgia for the recent past. As Charlène St-Aubin has stated, “Poulenc’s compositional goal was not to reproduce the specific style of the café-concerts or the musical hall chanson as much as to recall the sentiment evoked by the style and the performances as well as the pre-war era that was associated with this genre.”\textsuperscript{183} This aura of nostalgia for the pre-war era might be compared to other European artists in a variety of fields, as one might even think of Stefan Zweig’s novel \textit{The World of Yesterday}, with its moving recollections of Europe before 1914.

\textsuperscript{182} Fulcher, Jane F. \textit{The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France 1914-1940}, p. 172.

\textsuperscript{183} St-Aubin, Charlène. \textit{Francis Poulenc, Nostalgia and Parisian popular culture}, p. 126.
Through his membership of *Les Six* and influence of his mentor Erik Satie, Poulenc became a cultural figure during a period where culture was increasingly politicized. Poulenc’s works are imbued with “irony [that is] tempered by an underlying melancholy.”

Throughout the three works in question, Poulenc’s use of humor and acidic wit play in opposition to longing melodies. Even with this juxtaposition, Poulenc achieves symmetry in his pieces much like an impressionistic painter, as “…objects are not necessarily arranged in perfect symmetry, but are instead positioned to direct attention to a focal point and to relate the other elements to this central point.”

In all of the aforementioned pieces there is an affinity to French impressionists paintings of the time. The muted colors that are blended together and then layered to create vibrancy and texture in a painting can be realized in sound in the works of Koechlin and Poulenc.

These works by Charles Koechlin and Francis Poulenc lend themselves to discussion in several different yet sometimes overlapping categories: neoclassicism, wit and humor, folk-like and modal qualities but most importantly, an alliance to a French aesthetic orientation. As Darius Milhaud once wrote, “The characteristics of French music are to be found in a certain fluency, something sober and clear, with some measure of romanticism, and a strong sense of proportion and design in the construction of a work, in a desire to express one’s self with clearness, simplicity and conciseness.”

Both composers regarded melody as the most important priority when composing. Both composers decided not to follow the German-and Austrian-oriented trend towards atonality but rather to create new melodies based on modal and tonal harmonic functions. The six works we have considered are examples of chamber music of fine quality, demanding for the performers but still accessible to a wide audience.

---

184 Stringer, Mary Ann. *Diversity as Style in Poulenc’s Chamber works with Piano*, p. 28.
185 Ibid., pp. 79-80.
The early 20th century saw a pivotal shift in French music. With the political fallout created by the Dreyfus affair and other incidents including World War I, French culture and the arts became intertwined with politics and populist tendencies. While Koechlin and Poulenc took different political paths, as composers their music was linked and sometimes influenced by political developments. Both the FMP and Les Six were groups of highly educated and trained musicians attempting to create music accessible to a larger public. Both groups turned away from Wagnerism and away from the path towards atonality. They strove to create a French classical music that could retain popular appeal: music that was accessible to all classes, not just the upper echelon. It has been observed that, “the most important characteristic that Koechlin and Poulenc shared was their utter dedication as composers and their love of harmonic experimentation.”187 The aesthetics of French music of the interwar years find impressive embodiment in these six attractive works by Koechlin and Poulenc.

187 Buckland, Sidney and Myriam Chimènes. Francis Poulenc, p. 41.
Selected Bibliography


St-Aubin, Charlène. *Francis Poulenc, Nostalgia and Parisian popular culture*. Ph.D. diss, University of Toronto 2008


