

McGILL / McHALE TRIO

PORTRAITS

WORKS FOR FLUTE, CLARINET & PIANO

SPECIAL NARRATIONS
BY MAHERSHALA ALI



CEDILLE
,

McGILL/McHALE TRIO

PORTRAITS

WORKS FOR FLUTE, CLARINET & PIANO

CHRIS ROGERSON

1 *A Fish Will Rise** (9:01)

VALERIE COLEMAN

*Portraits of Langston**†† (26:03)

2 *Helen Keller* (reading) (0:23)

3 I. *Prelude: Helen Keller* (1:21)

4 *Danse Africaine* (reading) (0:46)

5 II. *Danse Africaine* (5:32)

6 *Le Grand Duc Mambo* (reading) (2:00)

7 III. *Le Grand Duc Mambo* (1:52)

8 *In Time of Silver Rain* (reading) (0:54)

9 IV. *Silver Rain* (4:47)

10 *Jazz Band in a Parisian Cabaret* (reading) (0:42)

11 V. *Jazz Band in a Parisian Cabaret* (3:56)

12 *Summer Night* (reading) (0:56)

13 VI. *Harlem's Summer Night* (2:54)

Demarre McGill, flute

Anthony McGill, clarinet

Michael McHale, piano

†† Mahershala Ali, narrator

GUILLAUME CONNESSON

14 *Techno – Parade* (4:23)

SERGEI RACHMANINOV, ARR. MICHAEL McHALE

15 *Vocalise*† (5:08)

PAUL SCHOENFIELD

*Sonatina** (13:59)

16 I. *Charleston* (5:41)

17 II. *Hunter Rag* (4:39)

18 III. *Jig* (3:39)

PHILIP HAMMOND

19 *The Lamentation of Owen O'Neil*† (2:50)

IRISH TRADITIONAL, ARR. McHALE

20 *The Lark in the Clear Air*† (3:51)

TOTAL TIME: 66:17

*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

†WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING OF TRIO VERSION

McGILL/McHALE TRIO

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Program notes by Elinor Olin

The sense of a place is intimately connected to its rhythms, the dynamic patterns that transport us toward imaginings of physical sensation and natural environment. The McGill/McHale Trio has selected music by living composers who inspire the listener to experience a series of multi-sensory portraits, each invoking a compelling sense of place. Poetic references and sonic imagery in each of these works impel us to engage fully with the music, to hear with *all* our senses.

CHRIS ROGERSON (b. 1988)

A FISH WILL RISE (2014/2016)

Hailed as a “confident new musical voice,” Chris Rogerson composes music praised for its “virtuosic exuberance” and “haunting beauty” (*The New York Times*). Born in Amherst, New York, Rogerson started playing the piano at the age of two and the cello at eight. Rogerson’s music has been programmed by numerous orchestras, including the San Francisco, Atlanta, and Houston Symphonies. His compositions have also been performed in New York’s Alice Tully and Carnegie Halls, the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and Symphony Center in Chicago.

Within his already-substantial repertory, Rogerson’s chamber music especially

reveals his deep connections with the environment. From *Constellations* for clarinet, viola, and piano (2015) to *Summer Night Music* for piano quartet (2012) and *Noble Pond* for orchestra (2009), Rogerson deftly communicates the multi-sensory immediacy of natural surroundings through a remarkable variety of sonic means.

Rogerson originally scored *A Fish Will Rise* for piano trio as the first movement of his *River Songs* (2014). Anthony McGill, who premiered Rogerson’s 2016 clarinet concerto *Four Autumn Landscapes*, asked the composer to re-orchestrate the movement for flute, clarinet, and piano to feature the McGill/McHale Trio.

The work’s title comes from Norman Maclean’s memoir *A River Runs Through It*. From the beginning of the movement, Rogerson’s fluid piano ostinato draws us into a sonic virtual reality of rippling water and light. The spontaneity and dynamism of nature are conjured up as the clarinet glides into the piano’s pitch stream and the energy of the flute’s exclamations increases rhythmic momentum. The three instruments are seamlessly intertwined, frequently changing roles of ostinato, main melody, and rhythmic interpolation. The opening section is the *source* (recalling the original French word’s meaning, “well-spring”) for the elements and structure of the piece. Recurring cycles of tranquility and surging energy alternate before ending in the contemplative mood of the beginning. In the most energetic sections, there are echoes of the open sonorities and motor rhythms often applied by America’s master depicter of nature through music, Aaron Copland.

Rogerson effectively conveys the invocation of *A River Runs Through It* that “there [is] no clear line between religion and fly fishing.” This music strengthens the connections between nature, music, and spirituality, invoking the optimistic perspective that (paraphrasing the final thoughts of the memoir) like a fish, hope will rise.

VALERIE COLEMAN (b. 1970)
PORTRAITS OF LANGSTON (2007)

A native of Louisville, Kentucky, composer-performer Valerie Coleman began her music studies at the age of eleven. By age fourteen, she had written three symphonies and won several major performance competitions. Today, she is the founder, composer, and flutist of the Grammy-nominated Imani Winds, one of the world's premier wind quintets. As a creative force behind her ensemble, she has created a powerful legacy within chamber music, much of which has become standard repertoire for woodwinds. *The New York Times* praises Coleman's works as "skillfully wrought, buoyant music." The composer describes the compass of her works as including flute sonatas telling the stories of trafficked Africans during Middle Passage, orchestral and chamber works based on the experiences of nomadic Roma tribes, and scherzos about moonshine in the Mississippi Delta region.

Portraits of Langston is a six-movement suite calling for virtuosic dexterity and ensemble subtleties from flutist, clarinetist, and pianist alike. Coleman's trio calls for an extraordinary range of expression — from introspective reflection, to whimsical banter, to shared frenetic anxiety. Each movement contemplates a selected Langston Hughes poem, intended to be read in tandem with performance. Coleman's notes to the score explain that she was inspired by Hughes's eye-witness experience of the legendary artists and places associated with the Harlem Renaissance and Parisian cabarets of the 1920s. "The imagery that Hughes provides gives me quite a historical palette.... Stylistically, this work incorporates many different elements that are translated into [music for flute, clarinet and piano]: the stride piano technique, big band swing, cabaret music, Mambo, African drumming, and even traditional spirituals."

The score provides highly descriptive performance indications such as *Sensuous*, *Frantic!*, *Majestic*, and *Poignant*, while individual players are directed to convey even more specific extra-musical ideas. The flutist is encouraged to emphasize an accented note "like a kick!" The clarinetist is directed to play certain passages "like a djembe drum." The pianist is sometimes instructed to emulate choral singing, and elsewhere to make a chord "twinkle."

"Prelude: Helen Keller" begins with the solo clarinet emerging from nothingness, finding light within darkness as expressed in the poem's opening lines. The flute joins in with its own version of the clarinet's soaring melody, an equal partner in this duo giving voice to the poem's "message of the strength/Of inner power." The prelude ends with the two instruments joining together in unison rhythms, moving from their lowest registers to highest tessituras and a *forte* declaration that there is a great deal yet to be heard.

Coleman's second movement, "Danse Africaine," explores the many implications of its title. Beginning mysteriously, with unpredictable rhythms in all three instruments, it unfolds in contradiction to preconceived notions of dance. Although the Hughes poem begins with a slow and steady pulse, Coleman seems more interested in the character of the dancer, whose enigmatic movements are "like a wisp of smoke around the fire." The music grows in intensity as layers of complex rhythms are stacked into an intricate textural web — the essence of African polyrhythms. The movement continues with abrupt interchanges between agitated exuberance and exhausted repose. In the end, sustained notes at extreme ranges for all three instruments express the stillness that follows unrestrained, passionate exertion.

"Le Grand Duc Mambo" is introduced in Coleman's score as "a jazz cabaret club in the red-light district of Montmartre where Langston Hughes worked as

a busboy for 25 cents a night.” This high-spirited duet depicting “a terrific fight in the Grand Duc” showcases the technical facility of flute and clarinet, each instrument taking its turn at a syncopated ostinato accompaniment while the other playfully explores the freedom and exhilaration of unrestrained melodic invention. As listeners, we find ourselves somehow transported back to the 1920s, observing the *melée* and taking in the hijinks of the Parisian *demi-monde*.

The fourth movement begins as a chorale, with stately blocks of harmony in the piano establishing a mood of calm nobility. Hughes’s poem “In Time of Silver Rain” was written in dedication to Lorraine Hansberry as an affirmation of life during her struggle with cancer. Coleman’s music begins quietly with a continuously flowing line handed off between flute and clarinet, in accompaniment to the piano’s dignified chords. Improvisatory solos in the winds are soon joined by the piano, building an insistent sense of optimism. The movement ends with a confident and affirmative flourish in the woodwinds, solidly endorsed by the piano.

The score of “Parisian Cabaret” instructs the performers to play “With a brisk stride piano feel.” After an appropriately wide-ranging, syncopated piano introduction, a playful clarinet melody is joined, somewhat unexpectedly, by the impish sound of a piccolo. The two woodwinds romp together in parallel lines as the piano consolidates its stride rhythms. After a moment of *cantabile* introspection, all three instruments start to tear it up, trading enthusiastic riffs in response to Hughes’s command, “Play that thing, jazz band!”

The final movement of Coleman’s suite, “Harlem’s Summer Night,” begins with a wistful flute melody accompanied by atmospheric piano chords, gratifying the images of loneliness and “aching emptiness” in Hughes’s poetry. The music grows toward the fullest and richest textures of the work as flute, clarinet, and

piano each pursues its own separate, but coordinated melodic and harmonic identity. As the work comes to a quiet conclusion, Coleman closes the circle of images — darkness to light, nature as emancipator, and strength “through the soul’s own mastery” — introduced in the first poem of the cycle.

Using a visual metaphor, the genre designation of “portrait” for a musical work, Coleman encourages the listener to respond on multiple levels. The impressions conveyed by spoken words in the poetry, enhanced by the aural cues of jazz and ad lib vocal call-and-response, brilliantly express the intersection between *here* and *hear*. *Portraits of Langston* articulates a declaration of “hear me/here I am,” inspiring each listener’s individual, eye-witness experience of the moment that is now.

GUILLAUME CONNESSON (b. 1970) **TECHNO – PARADE (2002)**

Hailed as a revolutionary whose music is written in collaboration with the most accomplished musicians, Guillaume Connesson has effectively captured the attention and curiosity of a broad listening public. With “profound disregard for musical boundaries and taboos,” Connesson’s music “reflects the complex mosaic of the contemporary world” (Bertrand Dermoncourt). After studies at the Paris Conservatoire, where he was awarded *Premiers Prix* in choral conducting, music history, analysis, and orchestration, Connesson has been on the faculty of the Conservatoire Régional d’Aubervilliers-La Courneuve.

His catalogue of works is expansive and varied, comprising symphonic works (including *Pour sortir au jour*, a 2013 commission from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra), an opera, a cappella motets for mixed voices, film music, and a significant repertory of chamber music. Many works in Connesson’s oeuvre

are compellingly rhythmic; dance fever has been a through-line, as evident in titles such as *Night Club* for orchestra (1996), *Disco-Toccata* for clarinet and violoncello (1994), and *Techno-Parade* (2002).

Techno-Parade opens with driving repetitions and virtuosic riffs conveying the relentless excitement of techno music. Yet this is an ironic take on the electronic music genre. Unpredictably shifting meters, occasionally settling into an uneven if temporarily constant feeling of 7/4, are in alternation with passages lacking the comfort of any obvious downbeat. In the middle of the piece there is a percussion break, where the pianist uses a wire brush and places sheets of paper directly on top of the piano strings.

The composer explains “[*Techno-Parade*] was written with a continuous pulsation, from start to finish. There are two decisive motives, swirling and colliding together, giving the piece its character, festive and disquieting at the same time. The wailing of the clarinet and the obsessive patterns of the piano seek to recapture the fierce energy of techno music... The three instruments seem drawn into a rhythmic trance that carries the piece to its conclusion in a frenetic tempo.”

Extended techniques and extreme ranges for the winds create a changing constellation of colors and textures, compelling the listener toward increasing levels of participation. Maybe you can't dance to it, but one thing is sure: this music *moves*.

SERGEI RACHMANINOV (1873–1943)
VOCALISE, ARRANGED BY MICHAEL McHALE (1912/2016)

Sergei Rachmaninov was one of the greatest pianists of his time, trained in the late Romantic tradition of the St. Petersburg Conservatory, and the stylistic heir to Anton Rubinstein and Piotr Tchaikovsky. It's no surprise that many of

Rachmaninov's works feature the piano and were written to showcase the composer's own technically brilliant performance skills. Another side of Rachmaninov's musical personality is heard in his nearly 100 songs, especially the collection Op. 34, dating from 1910–1912. The most famous of these is the Vocalise, No. 14 in the set, written for Russian soprano Antonina Nezhdanova. Known for her clear tone and agile coloratura technique, Nezhdanova must also have been gifted with tremendous breath control. The song's long, wordless vocal lines rely on melodic phrasing technique, continuity, and shading of tone color rather than diction of words for communicative effect. Michael McHale has translated the flowing, legato phrases of the original vocal line into alternating melodies for flute and clarinet, supported by the gentle rhythmic continuity of Rachmaninov's original piano accompaniment. Each wind instrument takes a turn at the soprano line while the other adds timbral richness. The instruments achieve full resonance as the winds soar in unison at the highpoint of the song, carrying the single vocal line together in a compelling and expressive transformation of breath into melody.

PAUL SCHOENFIELD (b. 1947)
SONATINA FOR FLUTE, CLARINET AND PIANO (1994)

Paul Schoenfield began his musical career as both pianist and composer, writing his first work at the age of seven. Following studies with Rudolf Serkin and Robert Muczynski (piano and composition, respectively), Schoenfield has held several teaching posts and worked as a freelance performer and composer in the U.S. and Israel. Schoenfield's experience as a piano soloist and chamber musician has unmistakably informed the immediacy of his compositional styles. Schoenfield writes the kind of music that combines intriguing complexity with a deceptive ease of accessibility. His works draw the listener in, stimulating our attention in a friendly rather than demanding manner. Drawing on popular and

folk traditions, in combination with the “serious” techniques of Western art music, the energy of Schoenfield’s music conveys both the excitement and the meditative focus of the performer’s experience — all in a single work.

Schoenfield has remarked that his “is not the kind of music to relax to, but the kind that makes people sweat; not only performer, but audience.” *Sonatina for Flute, Clarinet and Piano* is a fine example of this perspective. Titles for the three movements refer somewhat deceptively to types of dances. The slow opening to “Charleston” is evocative and moody, with uneven metrical changes that discourage foot-tapping or other dance moves. The music builds toward the lilting rhythms of the Charleston dance, but not without a good measure of irony (the score is occasionally marked “Puckish”) setting character and attitude for the balance of the work. Fluctuating between swinging, syncopated rhythms and an intentional destabilization of metrical regularity, in combination with lyrical and sustained melodic lines, “Hunter Rag” and “Jig” (the second and third movements, respectively) continue to undermine the listener’s anticipation of dance moves implied by the movement titles. Each of the instrumentalists is “made to sweat” with a virtuosic array of notes, unexpected harmonic patterns, and overlapping layers of considerable rhythmic intricacy. Changing tempos, deconstruction of dance patterns, and abrupt registral shifts in quick succession all contribute to the subversion of expectations in a work that is both high-spirited and thought provoking.

PHILIP HAMMOND (b. 1951)
THE LAMENTATION OF OWEN O’NEIL (2011/2016)

Belfast-born pianist/composer Philip Hammond remembers being fascinated by clefs, especially the bass clef. His first piece, written at age six, was *Sputnik*, a study of the nether regions of the keyboard. “Something of a contradiction in

terms,” he muses in retrospect. Since then, Hammond’s career has successfully integrated teaching, performing, and writing. His work as a broadcaster and composer has brought him regularly before the public on radio and television, as well as on the concert stage. Hammond describes his music as unabashedly emotional and deeply influenced by poetic traditions. He attributes a “retro-romantic” inclination to his years in Northern Ireland where “we all lived in a fantasy world of violence, but which some of us were able to blank out totally. At least on the surface of our existence.”

The Lamentation of Owen O’Neil is Hammond’s rumination on an 18th-century air attributed to legendary harpist and bard Turlough O’Carolan (1670–1738). First published in 1796 as part of a *General Collection of the Ancient Irish Music*, this ballad commemorated the passing of an early hero of Irish nationalism. Hammond’s tribute to O’Carolan’s lament opens with a quotation of the time-honored melody, eliciting the improvisational tradition of bardic performance in shifting time signatures of two, three, five, and seven. *Sotto voce* entrances of flute and clarinet are accompanied by the piano in layered fragments of the pensive tune, along with quiet interpolations evoking a Celtic harp. Hammond originally wrote *The Lamentation of Owen O’Neil* in 2011 for two flutes and piano, premiered by Sir James Galway, Lady Jeanne Galway, and Michael McHale. Hammond created this new arrangement for flute, clarinet, and piano expressly for the McGill/McHale Trio.

IRISH TRADITIONAL
THE LARK IN THE CLEAR AIR
ARRANGED BY MICHAEL McHALE (2016)

According to her 1896 biography, Lady Mary Guinness Ferguson hummed the tune of an Irish air to a Swedish harpist visiting her Dublin home. The visitor was

so captivated by the melody that he convinced his host, Sir Samuel Ferguson (1810–1886), to write new lyrics for it. First published as a “very ancient” tune, “author and date unknown,” the melody was included in an 1840 collection as “Kitty Nolan.” More recent research identifies the title of this ancient air as an Anglicization of “Caitlin Ní Uallacháin,” the text of which had been a plaintive call for Irish independence.

Ferguson’s poem, *The Lark in the Clear Air*, a celebration of springtime and love, became the vehicle for the older, traditional tune and was performed as such in late-19th century festivals devoted to music for the Ancient Celtic harp. Subsequently, the song has been embraced by many generations of musicians and has become a staple of Irish traditional repertory. Michael McHale’s new arrangement for flute, clarinet, and piano features three verses, with each instrument taking a turn on the tune. The woodwinds incorporate the melodic embellishments of traditional Celtic music and the piano carries them forward to invoke the sounds of nature.

Dr. Elinor Olin is a professor at Northern Illinois University School of Music and has a background in both music performance and music history.

McGILL / McHALE TRIO

The McGill/McHale Trio was founded in September 2014 when clarinetist Anthony McGill and his brother, flutist Demarre McGill, were featured artists in a residency at Bowling Green University in Ohio. While there, pianist Michael McHale joined them in concert for the first time, and it was immediately clear that the Trio would have a great future making music together.

Considered one of the classical music world’s finest solo, chamber, and orchestra musicians, Anthony McGill was named Principal Clarinet of the New York Philharmonic in September 2014, having previously been Principal Clarinet of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and Associate Principal with the Cincinnati Symphony. A graduate of Curtis, the Chicago native gained international recognition in January of 2009 when he performed with Itzhak Perlman, Yo-Yo Ma, and Gabriela Montero at the inauguration of President Barack Obama. He has received an Avery Fisher Career Grant, the Sphinx Medal of Excellence, and the John Jay Justice Award and serves on the faculties of Curtis, Juilliard, Peabody, Manhattan School of Music, and BARD.

Demarre McGill has served as principal flute of the Seattle, Dallas, and San Diego symphony orchestras, as well as acting principal of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. A graduate of Curtis and Juilliard, he is a winner of the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant. In addition to numerous education activities, he is co-founder and Artistic Director of the Art of Elan and a founding member of the Myriad Trio. The many chamber music festivals in which he has participated include Marlboro, Santa Fe, Seattle, and South Africa’s Stellenbosch Chamber Music Festival.

Pianist Michael McHale was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and now resides in London, England. Following studies at the University of Cambridge and Royal Academy of Music, Michael has gone on to become one of Ireland's leading concert pianists. He has performed with many major ensembles including the Minnesota and Hallé Orchestras; the City of London Sinfonia; and the Moscow, Bournemouth, and Jacksonville Symphonies. In addition to solo recitals and festival appearances, he collaborates with Sir James Galway, Michael Collins, Barry Douglas, Dame Felicity Lott, and Camerata Pacifica, among others.

For more information

www.anthonymcgill.com

www.demarremcgill.com

www.michaelmchale.com

www.acm360artists.com

MAHERSHALA ALI

Mahershala Ali recently starred in Barry Jenkins' Academy Award Best Picture drama *Moonlight*, for which he received the 2017 Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor. He also starred in the highly acclaimed feature *Hidden Figures*, directed by Ted Melfi, but is perhaps best known for playing 'Remy Danton' on the award-winning Netflix series *House of Cards*, for which he received a 2016 Emmy nomination.



Prior to his recent critical success, you could also see him in Gary Ross's *The Free State of Jones* opposite Matthew McConaughey, the final installments of *The Hunger Games* franchise, *Mockingjay Part 1* and *Part 2*, as 'Boggs', and the Marvel/Netflix series *Luke Cage* as 'Cottonmouth'.

His other credits include Derek Cianfrance's *The Place Beyond The Pines*, opposite Ryan Gosling and Bradley Cooper, and David Fincher's *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*.

Ali received his Master's in acting from New York University.

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