Recitals from the World Stage
Streaming from Wednesday, August 12, at 8pm through Tuesday, August 18

BOSTON SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS
ELIZABETH ROWE, flute
JOHN FERRILLO, oboe
WILLIAM R. HUDGINS, clarinet
RICHARD SVOBODA, bassoon
STEVEN ANSELL, viola
BLAISE DÉJARDIN, cello
EDWIN BARKER, double bass
with VIVIAN CHOI, piano

POULENC  Trio for oboe, bassoon, and piano
Presto
Andante
Très vif

John Ferrillo, oboe; Richard Svoboda, bassoon; Vivian Choi, piano

Allison LOGGINS-HULL  Homeland, for solo flute

Elizabeth Rowe, flute

HENZE  S. Biagio 9 agosto ore 12.07, for solo double bass

Edwin Barker, double bass

STRAVINSKY  Elegy for solo viola

Steven Ansell, viola

BRAHMS  Trio in A minor for clarinet, cello, and piano, Op. 114

William R. Hudgins, clarinet; Blaise Déjardin, cello; Vivian Choi, piano

Notes on the Program

The early music of **FRANCIS POULENC** (1899-1963) is so filled with the spirit of the boulevard and the café-concert that one might be tempted to regard him as a composer congenitally unable to take anything seriously. Largely self-taught, he compounded his musical style from a pharmacopeia that contained large doses of his idols—Stravinsky, Debussy, and Chabrier plus, among earlier composers, Mozart and Schumann. The three sparkling and sassy earlier chamber sonatas give little or no inkling of the unquiet darkness in his nature, given to anxiety and doubt covered with a bright facade. The Trio for oboe, bassoon, and piano of 1926 may be the earliest work that points to this pensive side of the composer, which was to result eventually in such remarkable achievements as the large unaccompanied choral work **La Figure humaine**, a strong attack on the Nazi control of France, as well as his opera **Dialogues of the Carmelites** and the late works for chorus and orchestra, **Stabat mater** and **Gloria**. But this aspect of Poulenc is limited to the deeply moving central movement of the present Trio. The opening movement fools us for a moment with a slow introduction of a mildly Stravinskian hieratic character that introduces each of the three instruments in a serious mood before they reveal that this was mock-seriousness and that they can no longer restrain their good humor, though every now and then they try to be sober for just a moment. The final rondo skips along in unabashed high spirits with delicious slips of key and joyful chatter.

**ALLISON LOGGINS-HULL** (b.1982) is a flutist, composer, and sound artist perhaps best known, for the past decade, as one half of the duo Flutronix, in which she performs genre-bending music with her partner Nathalie...
Homeland was written shortly after Hurricane Maria stormed through Puerto Rico in 2017. Maria represented the increasing strength of natural disasters and the intense, sometimes deadly, repercussions of climate change. While this was going on, there was also a rise of political and social turmoil in the United States, and global unrest throughout the world, including the Civil War crisis in Syria. For weeks, the news was flooded with these stories. With so many people throughout the world dealing with tragic domestic issues, I began to think about the meaning of home during a crisis. What does home mean when the land has been destroyed? What does it mean when there’s been a political disaster, or a human disaster? How does a person feel patriotic when they feel unwelcome at the same time? Homeland is a musical interpretation and exploration of those questions. The flute opens with timbral trills representing troubled waters, then transitions into passages that are anxious and distorted. There is a moment of hope and optimism, a remembrance of past struggles that have been overcome, followed by an off-putting play on “The Star-Spangled Banner,” representing an unraveling of patriotism. In the end we come full circle, still with unanswered and unresolved questions.—Allison Loggins-Hull

HANS WERNER HENZE (1926-2012)

S. Biagio 9 agosto ore 12.07, for solo double bass

I first performed this original piece for double bass during my debut at the Carnegie recital hall in the spring of 1984, and subsequently repeated the performance at Tanglewood’s Festival of Contemporary Music that following summer. The piece is beautifully written and very lyrical, with expressive whole-tone passages forming the primary musical means of melodic movement. The composition makes very eloquent use of the sonic capabilities of the double bass. Henze emphasizes the “long-string” vocal characteristics of the solo double bass, and the soloist must play a range of melodic colors; growing sub-contra moments, lyrical tenor colors, and even “airy” bass flute-like tonal colors.

The motivation for the name of the piece is rather enigmatic. Over the years since its 1977 composition and premiere there have been various attempts at unravelling the meaning of the title and the nature of the piece. The name “S. Biagio, 9 Agosto ore 1207: A remembrance for solo double bass,” makes reference to the location and date regarding an event of significance to Henze. The piece was written for bassist Dieter Lang for the CANTIERE INTERNATIONALE d’ARTE festival in Montepulciano, Italy, where Henze was artistic director from 1976 to 1980, and refers to the Temple of San Biagio, a prominent cultural sight in Montepulciano. The “August 9, 12.07” of the title likely refers to a day and time during which the annual mid-summer light show was particularly intense.

In his New York Times article referring to my 1984 Tanglewood performance, the critic John Rockwell referred to the piece as “…an elegy for a departed friend. It makes a mysterious, sad, elusive farewell.” Rockwell’s description of Henze’s solo bass piece as an “elegy” makes perfect sense and encapsulates the mood and meaning of the 6 minute piece. Over the years, perhaps as a result of the personal reflection that comes with “living a life,” I have come to understand intuitively that the piece is indeed about loss, grief, acceptance, and transcendence. As Milo Fulz effectively articulated in his interesting analysis of the piece, S. Biagio 9 agosto takes us on a journey through the five stages of grief, with clearly defined sections: “Denial, Anger, Acceptance, Bargaining and Conflict, Depression, and Acceptance.” I might add as well, “Transcendence.”

My initial inspiration for offering this S. Biagio 9 agosto ore 12.07 for the Tanglewood 2020 Online Festival was the result of an effort to find an expressive piece of repertoire that would have some connection to these extraordinary (COVID-19) times, AND adhere to the practical necessities of “social distancing.” The piece is unaccompanied (no face mask necessary). Coincidentally, the date of the online streaming performance occurs during a music festival (Tanglewood) in August(!). And in yet another connection, Henze was composer in residence at Tanglewood during the summers of 1983 and 1988.

—July 2020, Lenox, Massachusetts
IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882-1971) composed this little Elegy for solo viola in 1944 at the request of Germain Prévost for something to play in memory of Alphonse Onnou, founder of the Quatuor Pro Arte. It was originally composed for unaccompanied viola, but with the option of performance on a violin by transposing the score a fifth higher. In either case, the solo instrument is marked to be played muted throughout. The Elegy is essentially a two-part invention beginning with a chantlike passage over a flowing accompaniment, then turning into clever suggestions of a fugue—though without ever growing to more than two independent lines—before culminating in a repetition of the opening section.

Late in life, JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897) had been feeling himself on the verge of a creative impasse when he met Richard Mühlfeld, principal clarinetist of the court orchestra of Meiningen, which had become an important champion of Brahms’s music. Brahms was captivated by Mühlfeld’s playing. He spent hours listening to the virtuoso, giving instrument and player teasingly affectionate nicknames: “Fräulein Klarinette,” “my dear nightingale,” and so on. During his summer working vacation in Ischl in 1891, Brahms produced the Clarinet Trio and what with his self-deprecating wit he called “a far greater folly,” the Clarinet Quintet; later he added two clarinet sonatas. Together these works constitute a kind of autumnal renewal in his music.

The Clarinet Trio in A minor, Opus 114, is an almost unceasingly songful and intimate work, one Brahms himself was particularly fond of. The colors of the clarinet, from rich and warm to piquant and incisive, give it a distinctive quality in the trio literature. That color and the all but unclassifiable form of the first Allegro, which steadily develops its train of lyric themes throughout, form a classic demonstration of how Brahms was innovative within the context of traditional genres and models. There is much passionate music in the first movement, the opening cello announcing a mournful and archaic tone close to what has been called Brahms’s “bardic” style. The movement ends on a meltingly beautiful and gemütlich tone, the latter that untranslatable German word meaning something on the order of warm, cozy, good spirits.

The second-movement Adagio is if anything even more flowingly lyrical, starting with the clarinet’s opening marked dolce, sweet. Soon the instruments fall into a warm and lovely dialogue that spins out with nothing repeating literally, everything a continuous leisurely variation. Rather than the expected scherzo third movement comes an Andante grazioso in the form of a liling, wistful waltz, one of Brahms’s many tributes to that high-Viennese dance and state of mind. The concise Allegro finale is a prime example of the late-Brahms fascination with unusual meters: the movement constantly mixes 2/4 and 6/8, and there are sections moving between those meters and 9/8. The tone is tinged with Brahms’s beloved gypsy atmosphere, here less fiery than—again—lyrical.

JAN SWAFFORD

Notes by STEVEN LEDBETTER (Poulenc, Stravinsky), ROBERT KIRZINGER (Loggins-Hull), EDWIN BARKER (Henze), and JAN SWAFFORD (BRAHMS)

Steven Ledbetter was program annotator of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1979 to 1998.

Composer and writer Robert Kirzinger is the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s Associate Director of Program Publications.

Edwin Barker is principal double bassist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Jan Swafford is a prizewinning composer and writer whose books include “Beethoven: Anguish and Triumph”; “Johannes Brahms: A Biography”; “The Vintage Guide to Classical Music,” and “Language of the Spirit: An Introduction to Classical Music.” An alumnus of the Tanglewood Music Center, where he studied composition, he is currently working on a biography of Mozart.

GUEST ARTIST

Lauded for her artistry, musical intelligence and expressive intensity, celebrated Australian pianist VIVIAN CHOI is in demand for her depth of musical insight of a diverse range of repertoire, from classical to contemporary works, presented in thoughtful and imaginative programs. Since her debut performance at the Mostly Mozart Festival at the Sydney Opera House, Vivian Choi has toured extensively throughout Australia, New Zealand, Europe, North America, and Asia. Ms. Choi was awarded the Australian Guild of Music and Speech Award for Outstanding Achievement and the Australian Council of Arts Project Grant. For her contribution to the arts, she was awarded the
Vivian Choi was honored with the 2003 Achiever of the Year by the Australian-Korean Cultural Council, and honored with the Dame Joan Sutherland Award from the American Australian Association. Vivian Choi made her concerto debut as the winner of the New South Wales Secondary Schools Concerto Competition in Australia. Highlights of recent concerto appearances include the world premiere of Kate Moore’s Piano Concerto Beatrice in Australia and the U.S. premiere of Huang Ruo’s Piano Concerto with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project. She has appeared as a recitalist in New Zealand, Australia, Russia, Italy, the Netherlands, The People’s Republic of China, and Slovenia and Croatia as part of the Imago Sloveniae Festival as well as in the U.S. An avid chamber musician, she has performed at the Rockport Chamber Music Festival and Martha’s Vineyard Chamber Music Society and at the Muziekgebouw and the Korzo in the Netherlands. She is a resident pianist with the Chameleon Arts Ensemble of Boston and a member of Herza Ensemble Amsterdam. Born in Seoul, Korea, Vivian Choi grew up in Sydney, Australia, where she received her earliest musical education. She continued her training at Russia’s Saint Petersburg State Conservatory, graduating summa cum laude, and holds graduate degrees from the New England Conservatory and Carnegie Mellon University. Her principal teachers include Kyunghee Lee, Mira Yevtich, Alexander Sandler, Wha Kyung Byun, and Sergey Schepkin. She received her initial international recognition at the age of thirteen when she won, as the youngest contestant, Second Prize (Due Pianoforti) from the IX Concorso Pianistico Internazionale “Città di Marsala.” Since then she has won top prizes in international competitions in Italy, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, and Russia. Vivian Choi’s debut album of works by Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev, and Godowsky was released on the Northern Flowers label in 2010 to critical acclaim and has been frequently broadcast on WQXR, WWFM, and WQED. Future releases include music of Harold Shapero and Gail Kubik with the Grammy Award-winning Boston Modern Orchestra Project. She has served as a juror for numerous piano competitions and conducted masterclasses worldwide for institutions including Boston University, Carnegie Mellon University, Rollins College, Italy’s Academia Filarmonica di Camposampiero and Australian International Conservatorium in Sydney.