



rebellious  
LOVE is a BIRD



French music for oboe and piano  
Catherine Tanner-Williams Christopher Williams

# rebellious LOVE is a BIRD

GEORGES BIZET (1838-1870)

- |  |      |
|--|------|
| 1. Habanera "L'amour est un oiseau rebelle" (Carmen) * | 1:59 |
| 2. Seguidilla and Duet (Carmen) *                      | 4:26 |
| 3. Micaela's Aria (Carmen) *                           | 4:55 |

HENRI BROD (1799-1839)

- |   |      |
|---|------|
| 4. Fantasie on the Mad Scene from Donizetti's Lucia di Lammermoor, Op. 57 | 8:44 |
|---|------|

BLAI (BLAS) MARIA COLOMER (1840-1917)

- |             |      |
|-------------|------|
| 5. Fantasie | 7:49 |
|-------------|------|

HENRI DALLIER (1849-1934)

- |                      |      |
|----------------------|------|
| 6. Fantaisie Caprice | 6:06 |
|----------------------|------|

HENRI DUTILLEUX (1916-2013)

- |                             |       |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Oboe Sonata                 | 11:17 |
| 7. I. Aria. Grave           | 2:45  |
| 8. II. Scherzo. Vif         | 4:11  |
| 9. III. Final. Assez allant | 4:21  |

Catherine Tanner-Williams OBOE  
Christopher Williams PIANO

FRANCIS POULENC (1899-1963)

Oboe Sonata, FP 185	14:20
10. I. Élégie. Paisiblement	5:28
11. II. Scherzo. Très animé	4:26
12. III. Déploration. Très calme	4:26

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

13. Pièce en forme de Habanera	2:50
--------------------------------	------

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS (1835-1921)

Oboe Sonata in D major, Op. 166	12:10
14. I. Andantino	3:37
15. II. Allegretto	5:43
16. III. Molto allegro	2:50

LOUISE-MARIE SIMON (CLAUDE ARRIEU) (1903-1990)

17. Nocturne *	2:06
18. Impromptu *	3:07

TOTAL TIME: 79:54

\* World premiere recording

**Bizet's** famous four act Opera *Carmen* was premiered in 1875, the year of his unexpected death. The famous **Habanera** comes from the first act. Carmen sings to the assembled crowd of cigarette factory girls and soldiers, of how -

*Love is a rebellious bird  
That nothing can tame,  
And it is simply in vain to call it  
If it is convenient for it to refuse.  
Nothing will work, threat or pleading,  
One speaks, the other stays quiet;  
And it's the other that I prefer  
He said nothing; but he pleases me.  
Love! Love! Love! Love!*

Carmen, who has just fought and injured a woman, has been put under arrest. While her hands are bound by Don Jose, she flirts with him, singing a song about dancing the **Seguidilla** in a tavern in Seville, and tells him that her heart is still free.

In Act 3, Micaela has gone to a wild spot in the mountains where the smugglers hide their contraband, to plead with Don Jose (who has deserted the army) to leave Carmen and the smugglers and return home to his dying mother. But she is afraid, and in **Micaela's Aria**, she sings of overcoming her terror, and asks God for courage. The undulating arpeggios of the accompaniment show her unease, despite her best efforts to appear calm.

The oboist **Henri Brod** studied at the Paris Conservatoire from the age of 12, and in 1818 was awarded the *Premier Prix*. He is best remembered by oboists for his two volumes of *Studies and Sonatas*, and the keywork advancements which he and his brother made to the design of the oboe, which allowed oboists to play a low B flat for the first time.

Except for his sadly lost opera *Thésée*, most of his compositions were for the oboe. Brod, who was principal oboe of the Paris Opera Orchestra, evidently really enjoyed Donizetti's opera *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835) because he immediately wrote two fantasies based on the music; *Lucia and Edgardo Duo*, Op. 55 from *Lucia di Lammermoor* arranged for a trio of oboe/clarinet, bassoon/cello and piano accompaniment, (which is based on the Duo in Act 1 Scene 2), and this **Fantasy on the Mad Scene from Donizetti's Lucia de Lammermoor**, Op. 57 for oboe and piano, based on Act 3 Scene 5. The oboe fantasy starts with a brief introduction in A minor of Brod's own creation. This neatly leads us into the *Larghetto* (taken from the middle of the

Scene) where Lucia has killed her arranged marriage husband Arturo Bucklaw, and has lost her mind. She imagines a wedding to Edgardo, the man she really loves. The material Brod uses is from *Ardon gl'incensi! Splendon le sacre faci* (the incense burns, brilliant the sacred torches) onwards. This whole scene is commonly transposed by singers into E flat major but Brod retains the more oboe-friendly original key of F major. The section ends with the oboe and piano in close harmony. Brod then almost entirely recomposes Donizetti's melodies in a central section in D flat major, but retains the dotted rhythms and martial flavour. This leads to the final section, taken from Lucia's poignant waltzy aria *Spargi d'amaro pianto il mio terrestre velo* (Sprinkle with bitter tears my earthly remains), and here Brod stays much more faithful to the vocal lines of the original opera, later taking the triplets from the orchestral accompaniment to give the oboe a virtuosic finale.

Born in Valencia, **Blai Maria Colomer** was a Franco-Spanish composer, pianist and teacher. He began his studies in Valencia in 1839, firstly with Pascual Pérez Gascón (organist of the Cathedral of Valencia), and later with Justo Fuster, both of whom had a substantial influence on Colomer's future as a teacher, and to whom Colomer dedicated several of his later works.

It was whilst playing piano in the city's cafes that Colomer began to hear of artistic life in Paris, and after the death of his mother in 1856, took advantage of a scholarship to travel there to continue his studies. He entered the Conservatoire de Paris in 1857 and began piano lessons with Antoine François Marmontel, who later became the teacher of Claude Debussy.

As a piano student of Marmontel, Colomer became the first Spanish pianist to receive first prize for Piano at the Conservatoire in 1860, and later went on to gain first prize in harmony and accompaniment. Many other awards followed, firstly the *Société de Compositeurs de Musique* in 1878, and culminating in the highly prestigious *Prix Rossini* of 1889. Controversy surrounded this award, not least because of the fact that the prize is meant exclusively for French composers, and in Léo Delibes letter informing Colomer of his award came the question "Are you French?" All was settled as Colomer had obtained French citizenship in 1868, as attested to by his friend and colleague, Camille Saint-Saëns.

The **Fantaisie for Oboe and Piano or Orchestra**, published in 1898 and dedicated to the famous oboist and professor Georges Gillet, became the *Morceaux de Concours* at the Paris Conservatoire in 1899.

The piece begins in dramatic fashion: powerful chords in the piano are followed by an operatic *recitative* from the oboe. This idea soon blends into a slow melody in A minor, complimented

by a pulsating accompaniment in the piano. This gradually becomes more embellished with the oboe supplying a new accompaniment to the piano's melody.

As this section comes to a close the drama takes a new direction, this time in the form of a dynamic *scherzo*, introduced on the piano and joined by bubbly arpeggios and melodies in the oboe. The energy continues with lively rhythms, and a strong dialogue between the oboe and piano ensues until the coda is reached, this time the piano plays the melody in powerful octaves over a repeated chordal accompaniment, whilst the oboe supplies the virtuosic fireworks. This combination brings the piece to a highly uplifting and resounding conclusion.

The wealth of musical treasures composed for the annual *Solo de Concours* at the Paris Conservatoire make up the historical core of the oboe repertoire. **Henri Édouard Dallier**, who studied there under César Franck and received first prize in organ and fugue in 1878, wrote his **Fantaisie Caprice** as the 1903 *Morceaux de Concours*, which was again dedicated to Georges Gillet. Dallier's career was mostly as a successful organist, becoming *titulaire du grand orgue* of Saint-Eustache from 1879 to 1905, and succeeding Gabriel Fauré as the organist of la Madeleine. His compositions are mostly for organ. He also wrote several piano miniatures and other instrumental pieces including this *Fantaisie Caprice*. The only large scale work is his first Symphony, published in 1908.

The *Fantaisie Caprice* begins with a slow and mournful melody in B minor, characterised by ascending arpeggios heard firstly in the piano, and then taken up by the oboe which becomes more decorated with folk-like inflections and rhythms. This dialogue continues until the oboe reaches its climax with a passage to be played *ad libitum*, before coming to a close with delicate leaps on the oboe. The leaps continue and signal the beginning of the *Caprice*, playful and lighthearted in character with the oboe and piano bouncing off one another, this time in D major. The *Caprice* is interrupted by a return of the opening melody, this time shortened and more passionate, with the folk elements heard previously on the oboe becoming an uplifting accompaniment of the final *Caprice*, where the oboe again regails us with whimsical arpeggios and trills. This delightful piece gradually slows to a final cadence before one last flourish signals the Finale.

**Henri Paul Julien Dutilleux** studied Harmony and Counterpoint at the Paris Conservatoire with Noël Gallon (as did Louise Marie Simon), and was awarded the *Prix de Rome*. His first piano sonata, written in 1946-1948 for his wife, became the benchmark for his compositions. Those written after it he considered worthy of him and true to his style, but works which came before it he disregarded as immature. *"I always doubt my work. I always have regrets"* he said.

The **Sonata for oboe and piano** is from a group of four exam pieces written for students of the Paris Conservatoire where he was now teaching. Despite being composed at almost the same time as the piano sonata, and having stylistically similar piano writing, he disregarded the oboe sonata, along with a piece for bassoon and piano as well as the popular flute sonatina.

The first movement of the *sonata for oboe and piano* begins with a dark brooding canon which builds to a fever pitch section of high Fs on the oboe before fizzling away into the menacing yet delicate march of the second movement. Lyrical sections, where the oboe accompanies the piano chirpiness, provide a welcome calm between the demonic chatter, before the recapitulation of the melody from the first movement brings the second movement to a tranquil close.

The Finale is a complete change of mood, with a joyful melody of B flat octaves swooping up and swooning down, followed by sections of jazzy syncopation.

**Poulenc** was a largely self taught composer who grew up in a musical household in Paris and studied the piano from the age of 5. While he lacked the formal harmony and composition training of other composers, he was blessed with a high calibre of musical influences around him, including the group of his fellow composers (known as *Les Six*) and was friends with Ravel. His musical style was fresh and quirky, yet at other times filled with raw grief from the loss of many close friends including the violinist Ginette Niveau. "*I am a composer with no label*" he wrote.

This **Oboe Sonata** was composed in Bagnols en Foret in the summer of 1962, dedicated to the memory of his friend Prokofiev, who had died 9 years earlier. It was also the last work Poulenc wrote before he himself died. Poulenc and Prokofiev were both keen bridge players and met frequently in Paris in the 1920s to play cards and piano duets in the evenings. The sonata was premiered by Pierre Pierlot and Jacques Fevrier on 8th June 1963 at the Strasbourg Festival.

Poulenc wrote 3 sonatas for wind instruments, however unlike the flute and clarinet sonatas, which are in three movements, (fast-slow-fast) the oboe sonata starts with a slow *Élégie* marked *paisiblement* (peacefully). A sorrowful solo oboe call of four notes (D, B flat, E flat, F sharp, which may be a musical code or an unidentified quote) leads into a gentle series of drawn out ornaments which meander around the tonic G. A sudden central outburst of tritonal anger of brutal B flat minor piano chords and E minor screams in the oboe quickly subsides into a moment of shocked reflection, then mysterious quivering trills in the oboe lead us back to a reprise of the G major turns from the start. The cold dying final chord is almost comprised of the

same 4 notes the movement started with, except the E flat has changed to a C sharp.

Unusually, the middle movement is a vibrant *scherzo*, with an island of tender solo piano at its centre which quotes the finale of Prokofiev's flute sonata. Poulenc's placement of Prokofiev's music at the heart of the central movement and the centre of the whole sonata, enshrines his memory like a musical monument.

The final movement *Déploration* is slow and calm. A soft yearning oboe melody in A flat minor is soon interrupted by monstrous C minor chords in the piano, while the oboe resonates in the depths of its lowest note. This outpouring of emotion is quickly checked, and the movement dies away (via quotes from the first moment) into an uneasy A flat minor sharp 7 chord.

**Ravel's *Pièce en forme de Habanera*** was composed in 1907 for bass voice and piano. In its original form it is a *vocalise* requiring a mastery of the human voice. It has been transcribed for many instruments, including a version for cello by Ravel himself, and the oboe version is identical to the vocal version, even though the famous oboist Gillet claims to have transcribed it.

The melodic line is full of sultry Spanish flourishes which evoke the Cuban contradanzas in slow duple time. Like many French composers of the time, Ravel was fascinated by the music of Spain, and in the same year as the *Habanera* was composed, he also wrote his *Rapsodie Espagnol*, also based on the *Habanera* dance. *Pièce en forme de Habanera* begins in G minor but ends in G major positivity, with vocal embellishments and sensual *portamenti*.

An extremely gifted child prodigy, composer, organist, virtuoso pianist and conductor **Camille Saint-Saëns** went on to compose some of the world's most recognisable music: *Danse macabre*, *Les carnaval des animeux* and the Symphony No. 3 "Organ" to name but three. To have exceptional skills as a musician is one thing, indeed Franz Liszt described him as *the world's greatest organist*, Saint-Saëns was also a multi-linguist, an authority on literature and arts in his own right, a notable author and poet and an expert in archaeology and astronomy, as well as being the most distinguished composer of his generation.

Written in the last year of his life in 1921, the **Oboe Sonata** reflects Saint-Saëns' love of classicism and tradition, with its clear melodic lines and defined harmonies creating a sound world of crystalline sonority.

The first movement opens with a simple D major triad, followed by an oboe melody that echoes the Westminster Quarters - the four bells that mark the quarter hour at the Palace of Westminster. From here the music adopts an overall pastoral feel, becoming more decorated in both the oboe and piano whilst the subtle pastoral flow continues. The music arrives at a livelier and more passionate section where virtuosic arpeggios are heard in both instruments. The opening music returns and the sustained oboe trill, accompanied by more echoes of the opening bells motif, brings the movement to its conclusion.

The pastoral feel continues in the second movement, this time with rustic folk-like improvisations in the oboe over long sustained arpeggiated piano chords. The main body of this movement has a dance-like quality with *siciliana* rhythms in the oboe and a simple swaying accompaniment in the piano. The movement closes with a return of the original oboe calls.

The third movement is a technical *tour de force* in the form of a *moto perpetuo*, with alternating triplets and fast moving semiquavers cascade from both instruments in this short and dynamic Finale.

**Claude Arrieu**, (the pen name of **Louise-Marie Simon**) was the daughter of composer Cecile Paul Simon. Born in Paris, Arrieu studied piano and composition at the Paris Conservatoire with Marguerite Long, Paul Dukas, Georges Caussade and Noël Gallon. Well known among wind players for her Flute Sonatine and works for wind ensembles, she was a prolific composer who wrote piano concerti, film scores, vocal works and operas.

The **Nocturne in A minor** begins with a delicate chordal piano introduction, answered by a *dolce* oboe line which spans the high and low registers of the instrument in counterpoint to the lightly scored piano accompaniment. Subtitled *Preparatoire*, the *Nocturne* was probably written as a set work for students, who would be tested on their ability to sustain a slow expressive melody.

Her formidable piano technique is evident in the **Impromptu, in A major**. The piano introduces us to a world of slightly inebriated clown-like quintuplets in the right hand against staccato duplets in the left hand. The *Impromptu* is a masterclass in the humorous interplay of rhythms between instruments, with the oboe's sighing scales ending the first section. This leads into quite a Poulenc-esque central faster section of alternating time signatures, before a reprise of the opening *Andante*.



Cornish oboist **Catherine Tanner-Williams** studied Music at Cardiff University, where she gave the premiere of Anthony Power's '...further in shadow...' for oboe and orchestra, and won an award from The Countess of Munster Musical Trust to study with Douglas Boyd and Sophia McKenna. It was at Cardiff University that she met her husband, the pianist Christopher Williams. They began playing together almost from the moment they met, and he accompanied her for her final degree recital, her ARCM (Performing) Diploma, and her final postgraduate recital at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (where her teachers included David Cowley and Celia Craig). In their 30 years as a couple and duo, they have performed recitals across the UK.

In 2018 they released their first disc of World Premiere recordings of transcriptions and pieces by Richard Strauss, Glinka and Mozart. "mature, with impressive depth and range" - *The Musician*.

Then in 2020 they released a disc of neglected British music; World Premiere recordings of Richard Ellyn Jones' Oboe Sonata, Catherine's own compositions, and the two sonatas by Arnold Cooke. "The ensemble playing between both players is extremely good...both musicians also shine individually...Catherine's singing oboe tone, good control of high notes and rich sounding lower register stand out...lovely natural and balanced concert hall feel" - *Sarah Roper, Double Reed News*

"This is one of those rarities, an oboe recital which is both uplifting and entertaining in addition to presenting some very good music." *The Art Music Lounge*.

Equally at home in many genres of music, her playing can also be heard in the "bewitching" track Requiem on the Three Colours Dark album - 'Love's Lost Property', and the Super Furry Animals album 'Fuzzy Logic'.

She is currently principal oboe of Orchestra De Cymru (with whom she recorded her own Oboe Concerto under Emmanuel Siffert), and has played principal oboe with many orchestras including Welsh Sinfonia, English Symphony Orchestra, Bath Philharmonia, Ensemble Cambrica, Chamber Orchestra of Wales, Welsh Concert Orchestra, Festival Orchestra of Wales, Westward Chamber Orchestra, Burry Port Opera, St Woolos Sinfonia, Hereford Sinfonia, Cardiff Bach Orchestra (with whom she performed Bach's Concerto for Oboe d'amore), and also freelanced with Cardiff Sinfonietta and BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

As well as her Oboe Concerto, other compositions include *Darkness Falling*, with *Birdsong* which she premiered with Chris in Cheltenham Town Hall; *Hidden Birds*, for trumpet and piano, premiered by Philippe Scharz and Christopher Williams in Columbus, Ohio at the International Trumpet Guild; and the piano piece *Blue and White*; *Dreaming of Sleep* premiered in St David's Hall, Cardiff by her husband.

Both in Wales, **Christopher Williams** is a music graduate of Cardiff University, and now leads a busy and varied professional life as a pianist, composer, conductor, teacher and arranger. He teaches piano at Cardiff University, is currently a staff pianist at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and pianist for both the BBC National Chorus of Wales and BBC National Orchestra of Wales, with whom he has performed at the BBC Proms and recorded for the Chandos and Hyperion labels. Influenced by his first teacher and mentor Walter Ryan, Williams developed a keen interest in the performance and recording of works by undeservedly neglected composers, culminating in the release of three acclaimed albums of world premiere recordings by the composer Semyon Barmotin on the Grand Piano label.



Photo: Matthew Thistlewood

"This music requires advocacy such as it finds in Christopher Williams, probing its personality as surely as its technical mastery, his Steinway D accorded sound of realism and perspective...these premiere recordings of Barmotin are certainly worth investigating." - *Gramophone*

In addition to his work as a soloist, Williams is in great demand as an accompanist and chamber musician, and has partnered many of the prominent instrumentalists of his generation including Philippe Scharz, Tim Thorpe, David Childs, David Pyatt, Tine Thing Helseth and Anneke Scott. Williams' longest musical partnership is with his wife, oboist Catherine Tanner-Williams, and has resulted in world premiere performances and recordings. He has also appeared on BBC TV and been broadcast on BBC Radio and Radio Luxembourg. His recording of Brahms transcriptions for Grand Piano (GP749) was featured as album of the week on NDR Kultur.

**[christopherwilliamspiano.com](http://christopherwilliamspiano.com)**

Sponsored by

*Marigaux*

PARIS



Cover Design & Photography: Catherine Tanner-Williams

Booklet design: Willowhayne Records

Oboe: Marigaux 901

Piano: Steinway Model D

Recording Engineering & Production: Jim Unwin

Executive Producer: Mark Hartt-Palmer

Recorded at 24-bit 96KHz resolution

Recorded in Wyastone Concert Hall, Wyastone Leys, UK on 3rd & 4th September 2022

© & © 2022, Catherine Tanner-Williams & Christopher Williams

This recording was made as a collaboration between the artists and Willowhayne Records Ltd.

All rights of the manufacturer and of the owner of the recorded work reserved. Unauthorised hiring, lending, public performance, broadcast and copying of this recording prohibited. MCPS. Manufactured in the UK.

Willowhayne Records Ltd, Funtley, Hampshire, UK

[willowhaynerecords.com](http://willowhaynerecords.com)

[catherinetannerwilliams.com](http://catherinetannerwilliams.com)