



## Fest opener showcases oboe, bassoon

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**By Keith Powers / Contributing writer**

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Bassoonist Nanci Belmont and oboist Stuart Breczinski joined pianist Donald Enos in music old and new, ranging from Albinoni to Previn.

COTUIT – By pairing the unusual sonorities of oboe and bassoon, and then joining up with them to explore some invitingly diverse repertory, artistic director and pianist Donald Enos opened the 44th season of the Meeting House Chamber Music Festival Sunday evening in the gallery of the Cotuit Center for the Arts.

Bassoonist Nanci Belmont and oboist Stuart Breczinski joined Enos in music old and new, ranging from Albinoni to Previn. The settings allowed the two wind instruments, stalwarts of any orchestra but infrequently heard as soloists, to demonstrate their virtues.

Both instrumentalists made a smart impression, not only playing with style but speaking generously and enthusiastically about their concert choices before each piece.

The trio began with a Terzetto by Théophile Lalliet. The 19th-century composer, a virtuoso oboist himself, made a mark in his day reworking opera favorites into smaller instrumental works. This particular trio does not steal, but certainly sounds operatic. Its three movements are focused on a middle, slow section, with a wind duet of strong character.

Belmont then demonstrated two works from the same era – the turn of the 21st century – but of starkly different textures. Elliott Carter’s “Retracing” (lifted right out of his own “Asko Concerto” – but no arrests were made; he was 103 at the time) had that composer’s quirky but confident use of wild intervals. Jean Françaix’s marchlike movement for piano and bassoon was more accessible and melodic, but less fun.

Belmont then made André Jolivet's "Sonatine" for trio memorable, with an intense but still lyric line that runs through its slow movement. The strongly gestural work had playful interaction between the two winds.

It was Bieczinski's turn to make his instrument come alive with Saint-Saens's oboe sonata, one of the composer's last works, written the year he died (1921).

There is much to like about each of its three movements: how they progress, getting faster and faster (rather than the typical alternation of tempos); how the middle movement has an intro and outro that allows the player to decide tempo (Bieczinski stayed slow, exploring the lines deliberately); and how its pastoral character persists throughout, but never becomes clichéd.

After intermission two major works, Previn's duo sonata for bassoon and piano and the familiar Poulenc Trio, rounded out the program. Both showed the deep wit and strong character of the composers.

Previn's sonata found its way into jazz rhythms, lyrical waltzes and startling juxtapositions; its greatest strength was in how it treated the bassoon as a genuine solo instrument, right from the cadenza-like solo opening. Previn's reputation may focus on him as a popularizer, or a film composer. In fact, his music has inventive textures, requires intense interaction from the players (especially rhythmically), and still rewards listeners right on the spot.

It might be a stretch to call any work for oboe, bassoon and piano "well-known," but if there is one, it's the Poulenc Trio. It runs through many moods, from jovial to jazzy, and so provided these two virtuoso wind players one final chance to illuminate the musical possibilities of their instruments.

The Meeting House Chamber Music Festival runs through July 31. The next program features cellist Amit Peled on Friday, June 30 at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Orleans.

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