

Jeffrey Lyman Meg Quigley Recital, Tuesday January 5, 2021 at 2:30 pm EST/11:30 am PST

Radical Mid-Century Modernists: Four Women Who Reset the Standards at the Paris Conservatoire

Jeffrey Lyman, bassoon; Liz Ames, piano. All five videos were recorded live on February 19, 2017 in Stamps Auditorium, University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance.

1. Odette Gartenlaub (1922-2014) *Sonatine pour basson et piano* (1959 Éditions Musicales Transatlantiques, reprinted 2005 Editions COMBRE) (7 minutes)
2. Marie-Véra Maixandeu (1929-2018) *Lied et Rondo* pour basson et piano (1953 Alphonse Leduc) (6 minutes)
3. Ginette Keller (1925-2012?) *Ébauches* pour basson et piano (1973 Éditions Musicales Transatlantiques) (8 minutes)
4. Odette Gartenlaub *Profils* pour basson et piano (1966 Éditions Musicales Transatlantiques, rev. 2000 Editions COMBRE) (10 minutes)
5. Ida Gotkovsky (b. 1933) *Variations concertantes* pour basson et piano (1970 Éditions Musicales Transatlantiques) (15 minutes)

The annual *concours* at the Paris Conservatory have been a cherished part of Parisian musical life for over two centuries. It is shocking to realize that since the first contest for bassoon was held in 1797 only four women have been asked to compose works for the bassoon *concours*, and only one of those women (Odette Gartenlaub) was asked to compose a second. It's even more shocking to learn that the last time a woman was commissioned to write a new contest piece for bassoon was in 1973, nearly a half century ago. So it is my hope that by helping to spread the word about these five solo pieces that we can at last pay tribute to these groundbreaking women and to raise the profile of these works among bassoonists.

Odette Gartenlaub (1922-2014) Sonatine pour basson et piano (1959)

The extraordinary musical life of Odette Gartenlaub started at the age of 7 when she first began her studies of piano, and two years later at the age of 9 she entered the Paris Conservatoire. The very same year she won her first medal of honor for the study of solfège, the subject she would eventually teach at the Conservatoire for more than 30 years. She studied piano with the eminent French pianist Marguerite Long and in 1936 at age 14 she won a unanimous first prize in the piano concours, and the following year (still only 15!) she debuted with the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire. Less than a year after that she won the Concours International Gabriel Fauré while now focusing her studies on composition in the classes of Olivier Messiaen, Noël Gallon, Henri Busser and Darius Milhaud. In October 1942 she was one of the first Jewish students to be expelled from the Conservatoire by the Nazi occupation forces. After the war she returned to the Conservatoire and received the Prix de Rome in 1948, which helped launch her highly successful dual career as pianist and composer. In 1959 she added a third track to this musical life and was named as a professor of solfège at the Conservatoire and held that post until 1989.

As her own career benefitted greatly from her many prizes at the concours, it is no surprise to find in her catalog multiple works composed for the annual concours, including the two works on today's program used in 1959 and 1966 (with the second revised and reassigned in 2000), plus solo pieces for trumpet in 1953, cello in 1963, four works in 1974 for oboe, horn, tuba, and trombone, for harpsichord in 1976, guitar in 1977, trombone again in 1983 and finally the Étude concertante for solo viola in 1983.

Her Sonatine, which opens the program today, is notable for its cheeky angularity, its acrobatic runs and its emphasis on the dry articulation so characteristic of the bassoon. In a feat that only a composer who was also a theorist could pull off, she based the first movement on a couple of brief melodic cells and one tiny rhythmic figure from the Rondo from Schönberg's Wind Quintet, Op. 26. She changes a few of the pitches and then juggles these little puzzle pieces throughout the first movement. (See measures 28-29, 33, and 67-73 of the Rondo in Example 1 below and compare them with Example 2, the first page of the first movement of the Sonatine.)

EXAMPLE 1. Arnold Schönberg, Quintett Op. 26, IV. Rondo

The image displays a musical score for the Rondo from Arnold Schönberg's Wind Quintet, Op. 26, IV. The score is presented in a single system with multiple staves. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats), and the time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into measures 28 through 85. Key markings include 'Tempo' at measures 28-29, 'poco rit.' at measure 32, and 'Tempo' again at measure 33. Dynamics range from *f* (forte) to *sf* (sforzando). Instrumental entries are marked for Flute (Fl.) at measures 61 and 67, and Oboe (Ob.) at measure 66. The score features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth-note runs, and various articulations such as slurs and accents. The notation is dense and characteristic of Schönberg's style, with frequent chromaticism and angular intervals.

Example 2. Odette Gartenlaub Sonatine, 1. Allegretto tranquillo

Marie-Véra Maixandeu (1929-2018) *Lied et Rondo pour basson et piano* (1953)

Since the recording of this next work, much more has been learned about the life and career of composer Marie-Véra Maixandeu than was available only four years ago. In fact, this performance was one of several small encouragements by musicians interested in the music of Maixandeu for the composer's niece to begin to document her aunt's life and legacy. Thanks to her work you can now read all about Marie-Véra in detail at a website dedicated to her life and works: <https://www.marieveramaixandeu.org>

Kristine Fletcher's wonderful reference book on the morceaux de concours for bassoon *The Paris Conservatoire and the Contest Solos for Bassoon* (Indiana University Press 1988) states that at the time of its writing there was "no bibliographic information available" for Marie-Véra Maixandeu. The same reference book outlined many of the frustrations that bassoonists may have faced with learning this work, if they were able to locate a copy at all. The author rightly points out the edition's many mistakes and contradictions between score and part. For this recital I took these contradictions as a challenge and offered my best efforts at a corrected edition of her *Lied et Rondo*. It is my hope that in the near future I will be able to return to France and work with the composer's family to propose a critical edition.

Marie-Véra was born September 19, 1929 in Monte Carlo. Due to a tragic medical accident that burned her cornea soon after her birth, she lost a great deal of her vision. Despite this tragedy, she proved to be quite talented in music, engaging in studies of both composition and piano performance, and eventually she won first prizes from the Conservatoire in both disciplines. She soon added organ to her studies and the organist Emile Bourdon considered her to be his greatest student. At 16 years of age she entered the composition class of Jean Gallon, earning a

first prize in harmony in 1947, then a second prize in fugue in 1950 under Noël Gallon, third mention in analysis in 1950 under Olivier Messiaen, and finally the first prize in composition in 1951 under Tony Aubin for her piano concerto. In the 1960's she concentrated on teaching theory, solfège and piano, but soon took a greater interest in her family and her faith, eventually leaving music entirely except for the composition of numerous psalms.

As for the *Lied et Rondo*, one can immediately hear the influence of Messiaen in the opening lyrical section, and the playful style of Noël Gallon in the Rondo. Those bassoonists interested in performing the work are welcome to contact me for a list of the corrections and assumptions that were made by the performers in bringing this work back to a playable state. With a few more eyes and ears on the score, we can look forward to a clean new edition of this *morceau de concours* soon.

Ginette Keller (1925-ca.2012) *Ébauches pour basson et piano* (1973)

Despite studying with Nadia Boulanger, Tony Aubin and Olivier Messiaen, and despite winning the Prix de Rome 1951, Ginette Keller quickly shook off the formal influence of these legendary pedagogues and developed her own uniquely experimental approach to composition, one that clearly manifested itself in *Ébauches* or "Sketches", the first *morceaux de concours* to include extended techniques for both the bassoon and the piano. Improvisatory passages, tone clusters, pitch bends, fluttertonguing and harmonics are a few of the non-traditional sounds you'll hear in this work. Oddly enough, it would be another 11 years before any of these techniques would show up in another contest piece for bassoon, and that is a single flutter-tongued pitch in the *Sonatine-Tango* by Pierre Max Dubois. It would not be until 1999 that another multiphonic was heard coming from a bassoon, this time in Alexandre Ouzounoff's wildly challenging *NAIROBI, la nuit* for bassoon and percussion.

As with her colleague Odette Gartenlaub, Keller was a professor of solfège and analysis at the Conservatoire, and she also taught analysis at the École Normale de Musique. Biographical details are very sparse on Keller's life, and even the date of her death is in question: a blog hosted by graduates of the Conservatoire lists her death as being in 2012 but that could not be confirmed in any other source.

Odette Gartenlaub *Profils pour basson et piano* (1966, rev. 2000)

Gartenlaub's second work for the bassoon concours, *Profils*, was first introduced in 1966 but was chosen again for the concours in 2000 after she revised it and added a cadenza dedicated to bassoon professor Gilbert Audin. In this cadenza she explored even more extended techniques than Ginette Keller used in *Ébauches* or Ouzounoff in *NAIROBI*, most notably adding the distinctive growling *sons roulées* or rolled sounds, which are especially unstable multiphonics that seem to bubble and simmer when sustained. It must have been especially challenging for the students in 2000 to learn the new cadenza, since no fingerings are provided in the score for the *sons roulées*. I thank my former student David Pendock for discovering some fingerings that actually contain the principal pitches that are then "rolled," allowing the player to follow the melodic line indicated by the composer. The very last gesture in the

bassoon, a *fff* arpeggio in measures 199-200 must have attracted the attention of our next featured composer Ida Gotkovsky. Read on for the rest of the story...

Ida Gotkovsky (b. 1933) *Variations concertantes pour basson et piano* (1970)

The only one of these four women who actually taught composition at the Conservatoire, Ida Gotkovsky is a familiar name among many instrumental studios, having composed several popular works for wind and brass soloists. The virtuoso movements of her *Variations concertantes* are by far the best known of these five contest pieces for bassoon. However, there is one fantastic hidden detail in this work that not only points to a relationship with one of the other pieces on this concert, but that I would like to view as a gesture of solidarity among the composers featured today.

At the very end of Gartenlaub's *Profils*, there is a wild passage that closes the piece in a huge pile of notes.

Example 3: Gartenlaub *Profils*, final bars.

This same gesture was borrowed by Gotkovsky and serves as the piano ostinato that begins the first movement of her *Variations*.

Example 4: Gotkovsky *Variations concertantes*, opening.

I wonder: how did this borrowing come to be? Did Gotkovsky hear Gartenlaub's work being performed and recall that final gesture four years later? Were Gotkovsky and Gartenlaub friends, and did Ida ask Odette for advice on composing a contest piece for bassoon? At the

very least, this dense arpeggio draws a line of continuity between two of these four composers, and if that borrowing might be seen as the “sisterhood of the travelling arpeggio” then so be it.

These five works cover an incredible range of musical languages and technical demands, while at the same time venturing into styles and techniques that few if any of the male composers before them (or since) had explored when writing for bassoon. These “Radical Modernists” deserve our gratitude for, and our dedication to, their music. So the next time you feel like pulling out the Tansman Sonatine, how about trying Gartenlaub’s instead? Rather than another Hungarian Rondo performance, why not a Rondo by Maixandau? Test your ensemble coordination with Keller’s *Ébauches*, your finger technique with Gotkovsky’s *Variations* and your sheer endurance with *Profils*. The more we play these works the more likely it will be that another woman will finally be engaged to write a new contest piece for bassoon at the Conservatoire. It’s about time!

In the event that time constraints prevent us from hearing all five of the works on this program live, I am providing the links to these same videos, which are all available on the University of Michigan Bassoon Studio YouTube channel.

The playlist with all five works is at this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqLsax-EDKxCE3mV5bo-HejlzFnfF5Hpf>

Gartenlaub *Sonatine*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L4-6dMwgsMg&list=PLqLsax-EDKxCE3mV5bo-HejlzFnfF5Hpf&index=1>

Maixandau *Lied et Rondo*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5B73F5pbGss&list=PLqLsax-EDKxCE3mV5bo-HejlzFnfF5Hpf&index=2>

Keller *Ébauches*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agldHqL1lxk&list=PLqLsax-EDKxCE3mV5bo-HejlzFnfF5Hpf&index=3>

Gartenlaub *Profils*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60poQgQ49LQ&list=PLqLsax-EDKxCE3mV5bo-HejlzFnfF5Hpf&index=4>

Gotkovsky *Variations concertantes*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgkc4g4n0uc&list=PLqLsax-EDKxCE3mV5bo-HejlzFnfF5Hpf&index=5>