



F. GERARD ERRANTE

THE LYRIC CLARINET

TREASURED WORKS FROM
THE VOCAL REPERTOIRE
FOR CLARINET AND PIANO

Of all the woodwind instruments, it is perhaps the clarinet that has the greatest affinity with the human voice. Consider the composers attracted to compositions for voice and clarinet, most notably Franz Schubert with the lyrical and virtuosic *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen* and Louis Spohr's *Sechs Deutsche Lieder, Op. 103*. Brahms and Mozart, two composers who wrote movingly for the voice, were inspired by the famous clarinetists of their time (Richard Mühlfeld and Anton Stadler, respectively) to compose wonderful, lyrical melodies for the clarinet that rivaled the most beautiful melodies composed for the voice. Italian composers too, could not resist the opportunity to borrow the most appealing operatic melodies of the day and transform them into fantasies for clarinet that strove to embody all the fervor and emotional display that was inherent in the original. The word melody immediately brings to mind the remarkable Marcel Moyse, whose books of melodic studies formed the cornerstone of his teaching of musical expression to countless students of the woodwind instruments. So it is that the collection of beautiful melodies in this album offered by the accomplished clarinetist F. Gerard Errante is a welcome continuation of the tradition of vocal lyricism that never goes out of style.

When we think of the clarinet and French *mélodie*, it really is a perfect match. The clarinet, with its clear, haunting sound, can be one moment plaintive and the next sumptuous and still again playful and capricious. All of these qualities are embodied in the wonderful songs of Francis Poulenc and Claude Debussy. Poulenc in particular, loved the woodwind instruments and wrote his most inspired sonatas for oboe, flute, and clarinet. In a moment, Poulenc moves from the moving, profound sentiments of *Bleuet* to the Paris music hall feel of *Les Chemins de l'amour*, to the languor of a sun-drenched Montparnasse hotel room and finally to the giddy delight of *Voyage à Paris*. Debussy is no less varied, but perhaps more pointed. *Beau soir*, an early work, evokes a very French view, that

of the beauty of life even in the midst of the journey to the grave. In *Mandoline* the percussive, relentlessly strumming piano evokes a busy social gathering with background music, while the melody, with its rapid, ascending intervals, expresses impatience with the trivial scene. The version of *Clair de lune* included here is Debussy's earlier setting of this poem from 1882. While not as well known, the setting is beautiful, with the piano evoking a silvery moonlight setting in which we see shadowy figures whirling in the dance.

All three composers of German Lieder included in this collection made noted contributions to the clarinet repertoire. From Brahms we have the two remarkable sonatas, the clarinet trio and the clarinet quintet. The soaring vocal line of *Wie Melodien zieht es mir* is not unlike the first melody in the opening movement of *Opus 120, no. 2 in Eb major*. And Brahms' love of humorous folk song is equally displayed in *Vergebliches Ständchen* and in the Ländler movement of *Opus 120, no.1 in f minor*. Schumann had succeeded primarily in the composition of piano works prior to 1840, the year of his marriage to Clara Wieck and his famous Liederjahr (year of song). Rejoicing in the union with his beloved Clara, he wrote some 150 songs in an inspired outpouring of melody. Both songs on this recording are from that fruitful year, *Widmung* being from *Myrthen, op. 25*, which was a collection of songs given to Clara as a wedding gift, and *Er, der Herrlichste von allen* from *Frauenliebe und Leben (A Woman's Love and Life)*. Schubert's lovely *Nacht und Träume* offers a unique challenge to vocalists and clarinetists alike, with its long, arching phrases, evoking the vastness of a holy night. For these three great composers of the German Romantic era, everything truly was a song.

The North and South American composers on this album have in common a love of song and a love of the human voice. All have made notable contributions to

the song repertory. Indeed, for some, it is what they are chiefly celebrated for. Both Samuel Barber and Carlos Guastavino wrote for the voice with unabashed lyricism and even sentimentality. Barber was known to say that he wrote what he liked, and he believed that took a certain courage. Guastavino similarly eschewed elements of the avant-garde style that were popular with many of his Argentinean compatriots, in favor of melody, in which he was an inspired creator. John Duke was a respected concert pianist who famously premiered piano works by Roger Sessions and Walter Piston. But as a composer for the voice, melody predominates in his songs, which are also characterized by virtuoso writing for the piano. Guastavino's fellow Argentinean Alberto Ginastera was at the forefront of the most modern music trends of his time and that is certainly evident in much of his writing for the voice. Nonetheless, in *Triste* he is at his most romantic, writing a poignant, wailing melody that beautifully expresses the pain of loss of love.

Among the final group of songs from the Americas are two pieces by living composers, from whom we can anticipate more wonderful additions to the song catalog. Lori Laitman is a critically acclaimed composer whose work is primarily focused on vocal genres. She has a unique and sensitive affinity for setting the words of contemporary poets. Stephen Sondheim certainly needs no introduction. As a theater composer writing for the voice, his ability to wed music with words in the creation of a dramatic character and situation is unparalleled. *Send in the Clowns*, from *A Little Night Music*, his best known and most loved song, is a fitting conclusion for this recording. It affirms music as the universal language, which in this setting needs no words.

Julia Broxholm



F. GERARD ERRANTE is a clarinetist of international stature whose performances throughout the world have received critical acclaim. He has performed widely in the global community presenting solo recitals and lecturing in countries from Australia to Zimbabwe. A native of New York City, he earned the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Michigan with further study at L'Académie Internationale d'Été in Nice, France. He has published two books and numerous articles, composed ten works for clarinet, and recorded for eleven record labels. In addition, he has had many compositions written for him and is a well-known proponent of contemporary music. He is a prizewinner in the International Gaudeamus Competition for Interpreters of Contemporary Music and has served as Co-

Director of the Norfolk Chamber Consort for 38 years. In addition, Errante served as Professor of Music at Norfolk State University of 30 years where he received the Teacher of the Year Award on two occasions. A former President of the International Clarinet Association, Errante was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award by that organization. F. Gerard Errante is a Yamaha performing artist and performs on a Custom SE-V clarinet.



As a versatile pianist whose styles encompass a wide range of musical genres, **PHILIP FORTENBERRY** is an artist with an equally expansive career. A native of Columbia, Mississippi, Philip began playing piano at age four. As a much sought after Broadway pianist and concert artist, Philip has also played on prestigious stages from Lincoln Center to Carnegie Hall, from the Kennedy Center to the White House, including Radio City Music Hall and the Smith Center for the Performing Arts in Las Vegas. As a New Age and Inspirational pianist, Philip is a featured solo artist for the Watchfire Music label.

VOLTAIRE VERZOSA, pianist and countertenor, holds degrees in piano performance from the University of Montana and vocal performance from the University of Colorado in Boulder. He has performed extensively as soloist in both instruments on the national and international level. In 2010, he debuted in Carnegie Recital Hall in NYC, as a first prizewinner of the Barry Alexander International Vocal Competition. He is currently on the music faculty at the College of Southern Nevada, and is also the Principal Pianist for the Las Vegas Philharmonic. He is in constant



demand as a collaborative pianist. Although his obvious specialty is 17th and 18th century authentic performance practices, his applied knowledge of other classical musical styles, languages, diction, repertoire, vocal, and piano technique have enabled him to successfully coach singers from varied backgrounds. He teaches voice and piano privately, and has had several young students win auditions locally and abroad.



DR. D. GAUSE, a native of the Washington DC, area, has been active as a musician for over three decades on the Las Vegas Strip as a conductor, pianist, synthesist, and clarinetist. Gause has earned four academic degrees and is a Professor at the College of Southern Nevada, where she teaches clarinet and piano; she teaches other music courses online to students all over the world. Gause performs regularly as a soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral musician. She is a multiyear recipient of grants from the Nevada Arts Council as well as the National Endowment for the Arts. She performs and composes both in the world of new music and the world of popular music. Her compositions have been performed in Japan, Europe, Canada, Cuba, and the Americas.

"Play as though you are singing," is the advice that many instrumentalists receive from their coaches and instructors. It has occurred to me that actually playing music originally intended for the voice might facilitate this directive. I believe that the art songs that I have transcribed work beautifully as clarinet pieces, and naturally should be played as though singing. The four song groupings are separated by an instrumental piece that provides contrast, but also contains a lovely lyrical melody. It is my hope that here is a body of literature that clarinetists will want to perform; and that the general public will enjoy hearing in a new guise.

FGE

Tracks 1-4 and 19-21 recorded live in concert May 1, 2011
at the College of Southern Nevada in Las Vegas NV

Tracks 5-11 recorded August 4, 2013
at the College of Southern Nevada in Las Vegas NV

Track 12 recorded live in concert September 24, 2004
at the College of Southern Nevada in Las Vegas NV

Tracks 13-18 recorded July 28, 2013
at the College of Southern Nevada in Las Vegas NV

SESSION ENGINEER **John Jacobson**
SESSION PRODUCER **D. Gause**

COVER PHOTOGRAPH **F. Gerard Errante**

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER **Bob Lord**
PRODUCT MANAGER **Jeff LeRoy**
MASTERING **Shaun Michaud**
ART & PRODUCTION DIRECTOR **Brett Picknell**
GRAPHIC DESIGNER **Renée Greenspan**
A&R **Mike Juozokas**
PR COORDINATOR **Ariel Oxaal**

info@ravellorecords.com
www.ravellorecords.com
223 Lafayette Road
North Hampton NH 03862

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F. GERARD ERRANTE, clarinet

NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICAN SONGS I PHILIP FORTENBERRY, piano

- 1 La rosa y el sauce CARLOS GUASTAVINO..... 2:32
- 2 i carry your heart JOHN DUKE..... 2:42
- 3 El Sampedrino CARLOS GUASTAVINO..... 3:13
- 4 Milonga de dos hermanos CARLOS GUASTAVINO..... 3:02

FRENCH SONGS VOLTAIRE VERZOSA, piano

- 5 Beau soir CLAUDE DEBUSSY..... 2:16
- 6 Mandoline CLAUDE DEBUSSY..... 1:33
- 7 Bleuet FRANCIS POULENC..... 2:54
- 8 Les Chemins de l'amour FRANCIS POULENC..... 1:48
- 9 Clair de lune CLAUDE DEBUSSY..... 2:59
- 10 Hôtel FRANCIS POULENC..... 1:50
- 11 Voyage à Paris FRANCIS POULENC..... 1:01

- 12 lunar lace D. GAUSE..... 7:51
D. GAUSE, piano

GERMAN LIEDER VOLTAIRE VERZOSA, piano

- 13 Widmung ROBERT SCHUMANN..... 2:15
- 14 Wie Melodien zieht es mir JOHANNES BRAHMS..... 1:59
- 15 Vergebliches Ständchen JOHANNES BRAHMS..... 1:45
- 16 Nacht und Träume FRANZ SCHUBERT..... 4:02
- 17 Er, der Herrlichste von allen ROBERT SCHUMANN..... 2:59
- 18 Botschaft JOHANNES BRAHMS..... 1:46

NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICAN SONGS II PHILIP FORTENBERRY, piano

- 19 Sure on this Shining Night SAMUEL BARBER..... 2:09
- 20 The Apple Orchard LORI LAITMAN..... 2:59
- 21 Triste/Send in the Clowns ALBERTO GINASTERA/STEPHEN SONDHEIM..... 7:03