

A photograph of two women sitting in a theater with rows of red seats. The woman on the left is wearing a light blue dress and holding a clarinet. The woman on the right is wearing a yellow dress and has her arm resting on the back of the seat. The background shows many empty red seats receding into the distance.

# *She/Her*

MUSIC FOR CLARINET  
AND PIANO BY 12 FEMALE  
COMPOSERS

**MARIA DU TOIT  
VERA KOOPER**





**MENU**

**> TRACKLIST**

**> LINER NOTES**

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*Ivy Priaulx Rainier (1903-1986)*

## **SUITE FOR CLARINET AND PIANOFORTE**

- |          |                             |      |
|----------|-----------------------------|------|
| <b>1</b> | I. VIVACE                   | 4'24 |
| <b>2</b> | II. ANDANTE COME DA LONTANO | 1'44 |
| <b>3</b> | III. SPIRITOSO              | 1'48 |
| <b>4</b> | IV. LENTO E TRANQUILLO      | 3'06 |
| <b>5</b> | V. ALLEGRO CON FUOCO        | 2'05 |

*Grace Oforka (\*1993)*

- |          |                                  |      |
|----------|----------------------------------|------|
| <b>6</b> | <b>OLORUN MI</b> (CLARINET SOLO) | 3'51 |
|----------|----------------------------------|------|

*Grażyna Bacewicz (1909-1969)*

- |          |   |      |
|----------|---|------|
| <b>7</b> | <b>KAPRYS POLSKI NA KLARNET I FORTEPIAN</b> | 2'29 |
|----------|---|------|

*Marie Elisabeth von Sachsen-Meiningen (1853-1923)*

- |          |                |      |
|----------|----------------|------|
| <b>8</b> | <b>ROMANZE</b> | 6'07 |
|----------|----------------|------|

*Clémence de Grandval (1828-1907)*

## **DEUX PIÈCES POUR CLARINETTE ET PIANO**

- |           |            |      |
|-----------|------------|------|
| <b>9</b>  | INVOCATION | 2'53 |
| <b>10</b> | AIR SLAVE  | 3'27 |

*Ida Gotkovsky (\*1933)*

## **IMAGES DE NORVÈGE**

- |           |                  |      |
|-----------|------------------|------|
| <b>11</b> | DOLCISSIMO       | 2'15 |
| <b>12</b> | FANTASQUE ET GAI | 1'26 |

*Sarah Feigin (1928-2011)*

**13 FANTASIA FOR CLARINET AND PIANO** 4'20

*Francine Aubin (1938-2016)*

**14 UN SOIR À MONTFORT-L'AMAURY** 3'19

*Francine Aubin*

**15 UNA FIORETTI DI FRANCESCO** 3'53

*Germaine Tailleferre (1892-1983)*

**16 ARABESQUE** 2'35

*Lise Morrison (\*1988)*

**17 FALLOUT** 4'39

*Barbara Woof (\*1958)*

**18 DERVISH (CLARINET SOLO)** 6'28

*Theresa Martin (\*1979)*

**SOLSTICE**

**19 I. SUN** 2'47

**20 II. MOON** 2'57

**21 III. AIR** 3'00

**22 IV. FIRE** 2'08

TOTAL TIME: 73'05

**MARIA DU TOIT** CLARINET  
**VERA KOOPER** PIANO

# *She/Her*

MUSIC FOR CLARINET AND PIANO BY 12 FEMALE COMPOSERS

## **THOUGHTS ON THE REPERTOIRE BY MARIA DU TOIT, VERA KOOPER AND SOME OF THE COMPOSERS.**

Classical music has a rich history of male composers whose works have become iconic and legendary. However, the contributions of female composers to classical music are often overlooked and undervalued. For centuries, women were not encouraged or allowed to pursue careers in music. As a result, many talented composers and their music have been forgotten. It wasn't until relatively recently that female musicians and composers began to make their mark in the classical music world.

On *She/Her*, South African clarinettist Maria du Toit and Dutch pianist Vera Kooper explore music for clarinet and piano from around the world, written by women. The idea for this programme was born from a single piece, the Suite for Clarinet and Piano by the South African born composer Ivy Priaulx Rainier. Maria du Toit wanted to perform the piece, which was handed to her a few years ago by her first clarinet teacher, Arisa Voges, with the words "this is hardly ever performed, but it's a great piece!". Maria and Vera then started looking for more pieces written by women and discovered quite a few, but unfortunately also discovered that all these pieces are indeed hardly ever played or recorded – of some of the pieces not a single recording exists. Some of the composers did enjoy popularity during their lifetimes, like Ivy Priaulx Rainier, but after their deaths their music passed into near oblivion. The mystery became a mission – to celebrate and appreciate the music of these talented women and bring these wonderful pieces to life again!

The heart of this program is the Suite by South African-British composer **Ivy Priaulx Rainier**. She lived most of her life in the United Kingdom, but her music and compositional style was very much influenced by the African music she heard in her youth. Her Suite has

a very strong rhythmic element and is full of playful interaction between the musicians. In its more intimate and melancholy movements, the work at times feels spiritual and meditative. The last movement is a furious dance, a wild and fiery game between clarinet and piano.

**Grace Oforka**, also known as Graciedion, is an African Art composer from Nigeria who has composed several orchestral works as well as other instrumental and vocal pieces. After a slow, atmospheric opening the simple, repetitive motives are reminiscent of prayer or meditation, while the purity of the African spirit lies at the core of the musical lines. The recurring main motive has a yearning and pleading quality, at the same time one can almost feel the warmth of the African sun beating down on the parched earth. One can easily imagine this song being a prayer for rain. The first tentative drops fall softly in the dust, later in the piece the staccato notes in the clarinet suggest percussive rain plops on a tin roof. This piece was commissioned by Seun Onifade, a Nigerian Yoruba clarinetist and bassoonist in October 2020. One morning, after struggling with finding inspiration for the commission, Grace found herself humming the melody. She says: “This song, *Olorun mi*, was born out of prayer. I needed a song, and the Lord gave me a song”.

**Grażyna Bacewicz** was a Polish composer and violinist whose works have gained international recognition for their unique blend of classical and folk music traditions. For her *Kaprys Polski*, or Polish Caprice, Bacewicz drew inspiration from both classical and traditional Polish folk music. This caprice is characterised by an exciting rhythmic energy, inventive harmonies, and melodic lyricism. The piece was originally written for solo violin and later reworked by the composer into a piece for clarinet and piano.

**Marie Elisabeth von Sachsen-Meiningen** was a German princess and composer of the Romantic era. Born into the royal family of the Duchy of Saxe-Meiningen, Marie Elisabeth received an extensive education in music, literature, and the arts, which prepared her for a life of courtly duties and social engagements. Her father was a patron of Johannes Brahms, who gave piano lessons to Marie Elisabeth. One of her most cherished works is this beautiful *Romanze* in F Major for clarinet and piano, composed for none other than Richard



Mühlfeld, for whom Brahms also wrote his clarinet works. The influence of Brahms is clearly audible in this nostalgic and eloquent piece.

A French contemporary of Marie Elisabeth von Sachsen-Meiningen, was **Marie Félicie Clémence de Grandval** (later known as Viscountess de Grandval). Like von Sachsen-Meiningen, her family was also wealthy, meaning she was able to work as a composer without financial concerns. She studied with famous composers such as Frédéric Chopin and Camille Saint-Saëns and during her lifetime she became a person and composer of stature. After her death, however, she was largely forgotten, partially because many of her works were published under pseudonyms, because her social position as the wife of the Viscount de Grandval didn't allow her to publish under her own name. The Two Pieces for Clarinet and Piano date from 1881. The first, *Invocation*, expresses a meditative mood, while the second, titled *Air slave* (slavonic air) is a dashing, elegant and dance-like piece.

French composer **Ida Gotkovsky** takes the listener on a musical journey to her beloved Norway. The first piece, marked *Dolcissimo*, evokes an image of a foggy, mysterious landscape. One cannot help but picture breathtaking fjords, rugged mountains, and the enchanting Northern Lights. The second piece, *Fantasque et gai* (whimsical and cheerful), is full of musical humour in which clarinet and piano chase each other in a boisterous game.

**Sarah Feigin** was a Latvian composer who lived and worked in Israel. The influence of Jewish traditional music is not hard to spot her Fantasia for Clarinet and Piano. In this voluptuous, passionate piece, singing, melancholy melodies are sharply contrasted with festive and exuberant dancing passages that hint at Klezmer music.

**Francine Aubin** was a 20th-century French composer and painter. *Un Soir à Montfort-L'Amaury* (a night in Montfort-L'Amaury) is inspired by a small town in the Yvelines region of France, where Aubin spent her childhood summers. The music captures the peaceful atmosphere of the town with its sultry melody, gentle harmonies, and playful gestures. In *Una fioretti di Francesco* (a little flower from Francesco), Aubin explores rich harmonies and contrasting motives to create a nostalgic yet rhapsodic mood.

The beauty of **Germaine Tailleferre's** *Arabesque* lies in its simplicity and unpretentiousness, with the clarinet and piano dreamily moving together to weave a silky tapestry of sound. Germaine Tailleferre was the only woman in the famous group of French composers called “Les Six”. Encouraged and inspired by her friends in Paris — including Poulenc and Ravel — she wrote many of her most important works during the 1920s. She was active as composer and pianist right up to her death at the age of 91.

*Fallout*, by South African composer **Lise Morrison** is a set of miniature character pieces for clarinet and piano, composed in 2014. In a naturally very beautiful combination of instruments, this composition lets the instruments converse and quarrel a bit, taking each other's traditional roles in the ensemble setting throughout the course of the six short pieces. The late South African composer Surendran Reddy's distinctive “clazz” style of music was a great inspiration behind the piece, infusing a traditional Western classical idiom with elements of South African jazz.

**Barbara Woof's** *Dervish* was composed in 1995 for the festival ‘Conseguenze’ featuring the music of Luciano Berio where all of his ‘Sequenzas’ were performed alongside newly composed works for the same instrument. Barbara Woof said about her composition: “For me, the clarinet is an instrument with a large range, agile and enormously flexible. I therefore wanted to create a sort of floating music. Virtuoso, spinning like a whirling dervish. The idea of spinning tops and the energy necessary to keep the top spinning is what sits behind the piece. The piece therefore begins with a lot of movement, with a powerful pushing energy, and develops into long notes. These notes turn out to be the main points, the underlying melody. This static state is just an underlying thought. What matters to me are the moments when the top, the dervish, threatens to get out of balance, the acceleration that leads to a different music”.

About her piece *Solstice*, **Theresa Martin** writes: “*Solstice* was inspired by the birth of my daughter, Alaina, who was born on the summer solstice, 21 June, 2013. While I was pregnant with her, I wanted to write a piece that would be about her personality before I even knew her. The first movement, *Sun*, was inspired by Alaina's name which means “Shining Light,



Precious Sun Ray, and Awakening”. The second movement, *Moon*, was written to be contrasting with the first, because I realised she might be completely different from what I imagined. The third movement *Air* is the element of her sign Gemini, which we share as I have a birthday in June as well. The fourth movement, *Fire*, refers to the passion, love, joy, and excitement we hope she will experience over her lifetime. Although not in the title, her middle name Kayleigh comes from the Gaelic word, Ceilidh, of the same pronunciation, which means a gathering of people with music and dance. This was also inspiration for the musical material of the fourth movement”.

#### MARIA DU TOIT

South African clarinetist Maria du Toit took her first clarinet lessons at the Hugo Lambrechts music centre in Cape Town and obtained a bachelor's degree and performer's licentiate in South Africa with highest honours. She also studied at the Manhattan School of Music, the Utrecht Conservatoire, and the Sofia Music Academy. Du Toit was solo principal clarinet of the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra and major subject clarinet lecturer at the University of Stellenbosch for 13 years before moving to Europe. She has performed as soloist with various orchestras and won numerous awards and competitions – among which, international clarinet competition Jeunesses Musicales in Bucharest and the UNISA competition in Pretoria. She is regularly invited to give concerts as well as master classes and workshops across the USA, Europe, Asia, and South Africa. Composers David Earl and Roelof Temmingh have dedicated clarinet concertos to her, and she has given the world premiere performances of both works. Du Toit is an official Backun and Silverstein artist.

#### VERA KOOPER

Dutch pianist Vera Kooper has been described as a sensitive and expressive musician, with impressive technique and passionate dedication. In 2013, Vera co-founded the Delta Piano Trio. The trio has won numerous awards, including the *Anton Kersjes Prize* in 2020, and performs frequently in Europe, Russia, China, Korea, Indonesia, and the US. The trio's four CDs received rave reviews in leading journals such as *Diapason*, *BBC Music Magazine*, *Gramophone*, the *NRC* and *Luister*. In 2020, Vera released her first solo CD *Hope*, featuring works by Ludwig van Beethoven. In addition, in 2020 and 2021 she made an extensive tour of the Netherlands with Floris Kortie and *Het jaar 250 na Beethoven*, a theater production about the life and piano sonatas of Ludwig van Beethoven.

## COLOPHON

### **Production**

Channel Classics Records

### **Producer, recording engineer, editing, mastering**

Jared Sacks

### **Piano technician**

Charles Rademaker

### **Cover design**

Valérie Lagarde

### **Artwork**

Ad van der Kouwe

### **Photos**

Helette du Toit

### **Liner notes**

Maria du Toit, Vera Kooper and several composers

### **Recording location**

MCO Studio 1 Hilversum The Netherlands

### **Recording date**

November 2023

## *Technical information*

### **Microphones**

Brüel & Kjær 4006, Schoeps

### **Digital converter**

Horus / Merging Technologies (DSD256)

### **Editing software**

Pyramix Workstation / Merging Technologies

### **Cables\***

Van den Hul

### **Microphone pre amplifiers**

Rens Heijnis, custom design

## *Mastering Room*

### **Speakers**

Grimm LS1

### **Cables\***

Van den Hul

\*exclusive use of Van den Hul 3T cables

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