

**Benjamin Kearns, bassoon**  
**Wan Ting Yu, piano**  
**Bradley Johnson, bassoon**  
**Curtis Sellers, oboe**  
**Samuel Nelson, piano**

Graduate Recital Series

Katzin Concert Hall | March 24, 2023 | 7:30 p.m.

Program

**Concerto per fagotto en mi minore, RV 484**

I. Allegro poco  
II. Andante  
III. Allegro

**Antonio Vivaldi**  
(1678-1741)

**Concertino pour basson et piano (1948)**

**Marcel Bitsch**  
(1921-2011)

- Intermission -

**duo sonata (1977)**

Bradley Johnson, bassoon

**Sofia Gubaidulina**  
(b. 1931)

**Trio for oboe, bassoon, and piano (1996)**

I. Lively  
II. Slow  
III. Jaunty

Curtis Sellers, oboe  
Samuel Nelson, piano

**André Previn**  
(1929-2019)

Benjamin Kearns is in the studio of Dr. Albie Micklich. This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of a Doctorate of Musical Arts degree.

### Antonio Vivaldi - **Concerto per fagotto en mi minore, RV 484**

Antonio Vivaldi was born in 1678 in Venice, Italy, and was one of the most prolific composers of his time, especially in regards to music for the bassoon. During the baroque period, the bassoon was used mainly as a basso continuo instrument, often doubling low voices to provide support. Vivaldi was just seven years old when he became a violinist of the orchestra of the San Marco Basilica in Venice. While he played violin, he would go on to be trained as a priest and ordained in 1703. Following his very successful performing career, Vivaldi was appointed violin master at the Ospedale Della Pietà in 1703. The Pietà was a home for foundlings, and provided musical instruction to its female residents. From then on, Vivaldi would be associated with the Pietà for the remainder of his career. Vivaldi would go on to compose solo works for the violin, a set of concerti Opus 3 in 1711. This was the beginning of his work composing for solos instruments with string orchestra and continuo, amounting to more than 300 concerti. Combined with his concerti grossi, for multiple instruments with string orchestra and continuo, he wrote over 500 concerti in his lifetime. 40 of these concerti were written for the bassoon, of which 39 survived.

The Concerto in E Minor RV 484 is one of his most virtuosic of concerti written for the bassoon, and is well known for both its dexterity and beautiful lyric lines. The first movement's repeated thirty-second note figure requires the performer to have both incredible stamina and mastery of the instrument. Because of the difficulty of this piece among many of Vivaldi's other bassoon concerti, we are able to determine the incredible caliber of musicians that the young women at the Ospedale Della Pietà were at such an early time in the bassoon's history.

### Marcel Bitsch - **Concertino pour basson et piano (1948)**

Marcel Bitsch was born in Paris, France in 1921, and began his studies at the Conservatoire de Paris in 1939. There, he studied counterpoint with Noël Gallon, and composition with Paul-Henri Büsser among others. He was a recipient of the first and second-ever Prix de Rome competitions for his works in 1943 and 1945. He became professor of counterpoint at the Conservatoire de Paris in 1956, where he composed a comic opera, a ballet, and many instrumental pieces. Bitsch wrote several pieces for the bassoon, but the Concertino is one of our gems of French repertoire. It comes from the tradition of the Conservatoire de Paris Concours competition, for which a piece is selected or commissioned for students of the Paris Conservatory to play as their version of a jury. These pieces ranged greatly in difficulty but the Concours gave us a huge amount of additions to our repertoire. It is in the same compositional form as many of the other Concours pieces, where there is a slow A section, a cadenza, and a fast B section.

While these pieces are generally not very long, they contain some of the most difficult passages in the bassoon repertoire. Many of these pieces were more easily achieved because they were written for the French bassoon, which is capable of more high notes due to a different fingering system, compared to the modern German bassoon. Bitsch's Concertino is a tour de force and requires that the performer exhibit an incredible amount of dexterity at a very soft dynamic, making it one of the best pieces to show off the virtuosity of the performers.

### Sofia Gubaidulina - **duo sonata (1977)**

Sofia Gubaidulina was born in 1931 in Chistopol, Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, now known as Tatarstan, Russia. She began learning piano in 1946, going on to study piano and composition at the Kazan Conservatory. She then began studying composition full time at the Moscow Conservatory. In 1959 she met Dmitri Shostakovich and had the opportunity to play the symphony she had written for her final examination for him. Shostakovich praised Gubaidulina's work, and recognized that they, as artists in Soviet Russia, shared the same challenges. He told her, "continue along your mistaken path," which had quite negative effects on Gubaidulina's career and body of work. Her works were labeled as "irresponsible" by her teachers. Following her graduation, she worked producing film music that she was able to find an environment without strict guidelines for how and what she could compose, while also working in an experimental studio for electronic music in Moscow.

Her duo sonata for two bassoons is a landmark piece in contemporary bassoon repertoire. It features a variety of extended techniques that by having two bassoons, achieves a greater range of sounds that can mix because of the same timbre of each instrument. Two techniques that she uses that are expanded by this are multiphonics and microtonality. Multiphonics result when a note is manipulated by changing the fingering or altering the pressure of air going through the bassoon. This produces multiple sounding notes from the bassoon at once, which do not all sound in our traditional tuning system, and sound harsh to our ears. Microtones involve notes between half-steps, allowing for unique harmonies and dissonances that make our ordinary ones sound that much more consonant. This piece also reflects Gubaidulina's faith. Religion plays a strong role in her work, and symbolism can be found throughout the score. The themes of the piece occur three times, representing the holy trinity, while also containing several sections that compared to the harsh dissonance are incredibly reverent and serene. The duo sonata is very challenging for each individual performer as well as being difficult as a chamber work, requiring a great deal of concentration, control, and endurance. Gubaidulina is a pioneer for contemporary bassoon music, and has dedicated all of her bassoon works to her friend Valery Popov, who taught bassoon at the Moscow Conservatory until 1971. In addition to the duo sonata, her Concerto for bassoon and low strings is a master work for the bassoon, stretching the colors of the thin high range of the bassoon, cello, and double bass to its absolute max. Despite her struggles under the Soviet Russian regime, she was able to find success and recognition later in her career and has won nearly twenty awards for her work, as well as several honorary doctorates from New England Conservatory in Boston, and the University of Chicago.

### André Previn - **Trio for oboe, bassoon, and piano (1996)**

Andreas Ludwig Priwin was born in Berlin, Germany in 1929, and along with his family fled Nazi persecution to Los Angeles in 1939. He changed his name to André George Previn, and would become recognized as a gifted jazz pianist while he was a teenager. In the 1940s he began working for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, handling minor orchestration and arranging jobs, until he was officially employed there in 1952. Previn won several Academy Awards for his scores for *Porgy and Bess* (1959) and *My Fair Lady* (1964), just to name a few. Previn was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1950, and began studying conducting with Pierre Monteux while stationed in San

Francisco in 1951. After making his conducting debut with the St. Louis Symphony in 1963, he moved onto Principal Conductor positions with many other orchestras including the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and London Symphony Orchestra. Some of Previn's most influential and recognizable work include his opera *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1998) and *Honey and Rue* (1992). Previn wrote two pieces for the bassoon; one sonata for bassoon and piano, and the Trio for oboe, bassoon, and piano. They are both fairly recent, written within the last 30 years. The sonata was written as a gift for Nancy Goeres with whom he worked and had a close friendship. The Trio was premiered by Previn, Goeres, and their colleague, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra principal oboe Cynthia DeAlmeida in 1996. When composing this piece, Previn was inspired by the whimsical style of Francis Poulenc's Trio for oboe, bassoon, and piano, and combined with Previn's own jazzy flair, created a unique setting for the oboe and bassoon, who seem to try, jokingly, to beat the pianist at his own game.