This concert will last approximately one hour and fifteen minutes with no intermission.
PROGRAM

Claude Debussy  
Première Rhapsodie  (1909-1910)

Camille Saint-Saëns  
Clarinet Sonata, Op. 167  (1921)

Francis Poulenc  
Clarinet Sonata, FP 184  (1962)

Johannes Brahms  
Clarinet Trio in A minor, Op. 114  (1890)

Intermission

Bion Tsang, cello
Anton Nel, piano

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About the Program

Premiere Rhapsodie
Claude Debussy

Born: August 22, 1862, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France
Died: March 25, 1918, Paris, France
Composed: Version for clarinet and piano written from 1909–1910; later arranged by the composer for clarinet and orchestra in 1911
Premiere: Gaston Hamelin, clarinet in 1911 at the Société musicale indépendante, Salle Gaveau
Estimated duration: 9 minutes

During the late 19th century, French music had been influenced by music of the romantic period of composers such as Saint-Saëns, Fauré, and Chausson. Though Debussy’s instructors and fellow colleagues recognized his talent, they often found his harmonic usage of non-traditional tonalities, chromaticism, and musical innovations strange—or, as some might call it (though Debussy himself didn’t like the term to describe his music), impressionist.

Along with Camille Saint-Saëns Clarinet Sonata (1921), Premiere Rhapsodie is one of the standards in the French clarinet repertoire. Composed between December 1909 and January 1910, the piece was written for student clarinet examinations at the Paris Conservatory and first performed as part of the examinations on July 14, 1910. Originally written for clarinet and piano, the composer would publish his own orchestration of the piece in 1911.

Totaling nine minutes, the piece is exactly what you would expect from Debussy. As an examination piece it is technically difficult, containing clarinet scales and arpeggios that are exceedingly awkward for the performer with seven different key changes from start to finish. Also throughout the piece are slow lyrical melodies and capricious arabesques with immaculate sensitivity between the clarinet and piano parts.
Clarinet Sonata, Op. 167
Camille Saint-Saëns

Born: October 9, 1835, Paris, France
Died: December 16, 1921, Algiers, Algeria
Composed: In 1921, a year before the composer’s death; dedicated to French clarinettist Auguste-Élénore Périer (1883–1947)
Duration: 16 minutes

Saint-Saëns began studying music at a very early age, beginning piano lessons with his aunt at two and composing his first work at three with lessons from French composer, theorist and professor Pierre Maledin (1800–1872). Outside of music, he was also skillful in learning languages and advanced mathematics, and would also develop lifelong interests in geology and astronomy.

Throughout Saint-Saëns’ career, his music remained closely tied to tradition and traditional forms, so much that people considered his music, (like that of Faure), less colorful, and in the end, less appealing. He was known to dislike the music of modern composers at the turn of the 20th century like Debussy, and was publically vocal about it. Similar to Brahms’ later years, Saint-Saëns became something of a dry well, and it would be during his last year of life where he began a series of compositions for solo wind instruments and piano.

Starting with Oboe Sonata, dedicated to Louis Bas, an extraordinary oboe virtuoso, he continued with the Clarinet Sonata, dedicated to Auguste Perier, and lastly, with the Bassoon Sonata written for Léon Letellier, the first bassoon of the Opéra and the Société des Concerts.

The sonata is in four short movements and in stylistic similarity to Saint-Saëns’ earliest works, the clarinet sonata echos the galant style of the 18th century in form and tone, yet clearly recalling the Neo-Classical movement cultivated by young composers around 1920.
Clarinett Sonata, FP 184
Francis Poulenc

Born: January 7, 1899, Paris, France
Died: January 30, 1963, Paris, France
Composed: 1962—commissioned by Benny Goodman
Premiere: Benny Goodman, clarinet; Leonard Bernstein, piano—April 10
1963 at Carnegie Hall
Duration: 15 minutes

Francis Poulenc, one of the most frequently performed, recorded and
studied members of Les Six, played an important role in French music
following the era of impressionism, formality, and intellectualism that was
commonly associated with the music of Saint-Saëns and Debussy.
During the beginning of his composition career Poulenc was known to
be energetic and irreverent, but his later years—perhaps because of his
immediate involvement during the world wars—were known to have a more
solemn side which one can hear clearly in his religious music.

Composed in 1962, the Clarinet Sonata was composed to the memory of
his friend Arthur Honegger—also a member of Les Six, and is the second
of three woodwind sonatas which he wrote in the last years of his life, the
other two being the sonata for flute and the sonata for oboe. The Clarinet
Sonata was commissioned by famous big band jazz clarinetist and composer
Benny Goodman (1909–1986) who had intended to give the premiere with
the composer at the piano, but Poulenc suddenly died of a heart attack
on January 30, 1963 right before it was to be published. It would then be
premiered by Benny Goodman and Leonard Bernstein on April 10, 1963 at
Carnegie Hall.

He wrote in a direct and tuneful manner, often juxtaposing the witty and
ironic with the sentimental or melancholy. He heavily favored diatonic and
modal textures over chromatic writing. His music also shows many elements
of pandiatonicism, introduced around 1920 by Stravinsky, whose influence
can be heard in some of Poulenc’s compositions, such as the religious choral
work, Gloria.
Clarinet Trio in A minor, Op. 114
Johannes Brahms

Born: May 7, 1833, Hamburg, Germany
Died: April 3, 1897, Vienna, Austria
Composed: Summer of 1891 in Ischl, Austria
Premiere: December 12, 1891 in Berlin’s Saal der Singakademie with Richard Mühlfeld (clarinet), Robert Hausmann (cello), and Johannes Brahms (piano)
Duration: 25 minutes

In a letter which dates back to December 11, 1890 from Vienna, Brahms declared to friends and wrote to his publisher, Fritz Simrock, that he would retire as a composer after writing his String Quintet No. 2 in G Major, Op. 111. “With that scrap of paper, you can take your farewell from my music—because quite generally, it is time to stop.” However, his retirement would not last long.

While in Ischl, Austria, in the summer of 1891, Brahms would encounter and befriend the remarkable clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld (1856–1907), whose playing inspired Brahms to compose the two of four clarinet works: the Clarinet Quintet in B minor, Op. 115, and tonight’s performance of the Clarinet Trio in A minor, Op. 114. Among these clarinet pieces, Brahms would also compose some of his most celebrated piano works including the Seven Fantasies for Piano, Op. 116; Three Intermezzi, Op. 117; Six Pieces for Piano Op. 118 and his Four Pieces for Piano, Op. 119. A renewed encounter during the summer of 1894 (also in Ischl) would motivate Brahms to also write his last chamber music—the two Sonatas for Clarinet, Op. 120.

Brahms’s friend Eusebius Mandyczewski, a respected musical scholar, wrote of the Clarinet Trio in a letter to the composer, “It is as though the instruments were in love with each other.” The trio is set in four movements with the overall tone of the piece quite somber, containing both romantic and introspective qualities.
Jonathan Gunn is a versatile artist with a varied career as an educator, soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral performer. Currently, Mr. Gunn serves as the assistant professor of clarinet at the Butler School of Music at The University of Texas at Austin. Appointed by Maestro Paavo Järvi to the position of associate principal and E-flat clarinet of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra in 2004, Mr. Gunn served as principal clarinet from 2011 to 2016 before joining the faculty at the Butler School of Music. Prior to joining the Cincinnati Symphony, he was the principal clarinetist of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic, and has performed as guest principal clarinet with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra on multiple occasions and has performed with the New York Philharmonic, Pittsburgh, and Colorado Symphony Orchestras.

Committed to the education of the next generation of clarinetists, Mr. Gunn gives master classes and recitals around the country, and has served on the faculties of the Buffet-Crampon Summer Academy, the Aria International Summer Academy and the National Youth Orchestra of the USA. Prior to joining the faculty at The University of Texas, he served on the faculties of the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Indiana-Purdue University Fort Wayne, Goshen College, Andrews University and Seton Hill University.

Born in Sheffield, England, Mr. Gunn started his musical career playing violin and piano and began studying the clarinet after moving to the United States at age eleven. He received a bachelor of music from the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University and a master of music from the Mary Pappert School of Music at Duquesne University. Jonathan is married to Jennifer Gunn, who plays piccolo and flute with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Mr. Gunn is a D'Addario artist and musician advisor, a Buffet Group USA Performing Artist and plays exclusively on Buffet-Crampon clarinets.
Cellist Bion Tsang is internationally recognized as one of the outstanding instrumentalists of his generation: among his many honors are an Avery Fisher Career Grant, an MEF Career Grant and the Bronze Medal in the IX International Tchaikovsky Competition. Mr. Tsang earned a 2010 Grammy nomination for his performance on the 2009 PBS special A Company of Voices: Conspirare in Concert.

Recent highlights include making his solo debuts at Orchestra Hall in Chicago with Zubin Mehta and the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles with the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, and at the Esplanade in Boston with the Longwood Symphony Orchestra. He also gave the U.S. premiere of the Enescu Symphonie Concertante, Op. 8 with the American Symphony Orchestra in Avery Fisher Hall and the U.S. premiere of Tan Dun’s Crouching Tiger Concerto for Cello Solo and Chamber Orchestra at Atlanta’s Symphony Hall. Tsang makes his Mexico City Philharmonic Orchestra debut this season.

Mr. Tsang resides in Austin, TX where he is division head of strings and holds the Joe R. & Teresa Lozano Long Chair in Cello at the Sarah and Ernest Butler School of Music at The University of Texas at Austin. He was the recipient of the Texas Exes Teaching Award after just his first year of service and in 2004-05 was named “Instrumentalist of the Year” by the Austin Critics Table. In 2005-2006 he was also visiting professor at Indiana University in Bloomington.

In his spare time, Bion helps his family run the Paul J. Tsang Foundation, a nonprofit organization named in honor of Bion’s father and formed to help facilitate educational or career opportunities for promising students and professionals in the arts and sciences. He also enjoys coaching and, especially, trying to keep up with the various adventures and endeavors of his three children: Bailey, Henry and Maia.
Anton Nel, winner of the first prize in the 1987 Naumburg International Piano Competition at Carnegie Hall, enjoys a remarkable and multifaceted career that has taken him to North and South America, Europe, Asia, and South Africa. Following an auspicious debut at the age of twelve with Beethoven’s C Major Concerto after only two years of study, the Johannesburg native captured first prizes in all the major South African competitions while still in his teens, toured his native country extensively and became a well-known radio and television personality.

A student of Adolph Hallis, he made his European debut in France in 1982, and in the same year graduated with highest distinction from the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. He came to the United States in 1983, attending the University of Cincinnati, where he pursued his Master and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees under Bela Siki and Frank Weinstock. In addition to garnering many awards from his alma mater during this period he was a prizewinner at the 1984 Leeds International Piano Competition in England and won several first prizes at the Joanna Hodges International Piano Competition in Palm Desert in 1986. Mr. Nel’s nearly four decades of concertizing feature an active repertoire of more than 100 works for piano and orchestra including performances with the Cleveland Orchestra, the symphonies of Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, Detroit, and London, among many others.

An acclaimed Beethoven interpreter, Mr. Nel has performed the concerto cycle several times, most notably on two consecutive evenings with the Cape Philharmonic in 2005. He was also chosen to give the North American premiere of the newly discovered Piano Concerto No. 3 in E Minor by Felix Mendelssohn in 1992. Two noteworthy world premieres of works by living composers include Virtuoso Alice by David Del Tredici (dedicated to, and performed by Mr. Nel at his Lincoln Center debut in 1988) as well as Stephen Paulus’s Piano Concerto also written for Mr. Nel; the acclaimed world premiere took place in New York in 2003.
Anton Nel, *piano*
Bion Tsang, *cello*

Monday, April 16, 7:30 PM
Bates Recital Hall

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**Claude Debussy**
Sonata for cello and piano in D minor

**Ludwig van Beethoven**
Sonata in F major for cello and piano, Op. 17

**Leonard Bernstein**
Three Meditations from MASS for cello and piano

**Johannes Brahms**
Sonata in F major for cello and piano, Op. 99

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The University of Texas Symphony Orchestra

Monday, April 30, 7:30 PM
Bates Recital Hall

CONDUCTOR
Gerhardt Zimmermann

W. A. Mozart
Symphony No. 40 in G minor

SAXOPHONE
Calvin Wong

Henri Tomasi
Concerto for Alto Saxophone

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UPCOMING CONCERTS

Early Music Ensemble
Tuesday, April 17, 7:30 PM
Recital Studio, MRH 2.608

Caribbean Ensemble
Wednesday, April 18, 7:30 PM
Bates Recital Hall

BUTLER OPERA CENTER PRESENTS
Falstaff
Friday, April 20, 7:30 PM
Sunday, April 22, 4:00 PM
Friday, April 27, 7:30 PM
Sunday, April 29, 4:00 PM
McCullough Theatre

Tonight’s program notes written by Nick Galuban, program notes annotator for the Butler School of Music.

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