



Hugh Hodgson School of Music

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

presents a
Graduate Recital

Marissa Ankeny, *oboe*
Damon Denton, *piano*

March 30, 2026

5:30 pm, Ramsey Recital Hall

Suite in Color for Oboe, Horn, Percussion, and Piano

Jacob Evarts
(b. 2003)

- I. *Green (The Forest)*
- II. *Blue (Desolation)*
- III. *Red (The Fire: Anger)*

Joshua Wood, *horn*
David MacPherson, *percussion*
Greg Hankins, *piano*

Sonata for Oboe and Piano

Francis Poulenc
(1899 – 1963)

- I. *Elégie*
- II. *Scherzo*
- III. *Déploration*

Brief Intermission

Concerto in A minor for Oboe and Strings

Ralph Vaughan Williams
(1872 – 1958)

- I. *Rondo Pastorale*
- II. *Minuet and Musette*
- III. *Finale: Scherzo*

*This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the degree Doctor of Musical Arts in Performance.
Marissa Ankeny is a student of Dr. Reid Messich.*

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Program Notes

Suite in Color for Oboe, Horn, Percussion, and Piano

Jacob Evarts

Jacob Evarts is an award-winning American composer whose music bridges concert and media traditions with vivid imagery and structural clarity. His works have been performed internationally by ensembles including the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the U.S. Naval Academy Band, and the Orlando Philharmonic. A Georgia native, Evarts began composing at age ten and won the Georgia Music Educators Association Composition Competition for five consecutive years. A graduate of the University of Georgia with degrees in composition and film/media scoring, he writes music that is cinematic in color yet grounded in classical craft.

Suite in Color was written specifically for the performers on this program, shaped in close collaboration with the ensemble and tailored to the distinctive combination of oboe, horn, percussion, and piano. The three movements draw upon elemental imagery—earth, water/ice, and fire—each translated into a vivid musical palette. Evarts writes:

“*Suite in Color* is inspired by three of the four classical elements, and the color most commonly associated with them. It was a lot of fun compiling these ideas into a suite for this unique instrumentation in a way that I hope is musically rewarding to the listener.”

The first movement, ***Green (The Forest)***, represents earth. Warm horn sonorities and lyrical oboe lines intertwine above grounded piano textures and organic percussion colors. The music suggests growth and rootedness—sunlight filtering through a canopy, shifting winds, and the quiet vitality of the natural world.

The second movement, ***Blue (Desolation)***, evokes water and ice. The soundscape becomes expansive and spare, reflecting the solitude of a vast tundra or open sea. Long, sustained lines and cool harmonic colors create a sense of distance; the oboe and horn call to one another across a desolate, open landscape.

The final movement, ***Red (The Fire: Anger)***, ignites the ensemble with driving rhythms and bold gestures. Percussion propels the music forward while the oboe and horn alternate between searing intensity and blazing lyricism. The movement captures both the volatility and transformative power of fire, building toward a forceful and electrifying conclusion.

By organizing the suite around elemental color, Evarts invites listeners to experience music as something visual and visceral. The pairing of oboe and horn offers both contrast and blend—reedy clarity against burnished warmth—while piano and percussion expand the ensemble’s expressive range. In *Suite in Color*, sound becomes hue, texture becomes atmosphere, and the ensemble becomes a canvas painted in green, blue, and red.

Sonata for Oboe and Piano

Francis Poulenc

French composer Francis Poulenc was a central figure in 20th-century music and a member of *Les Six*, a group of composers who sought clarity, wit, and emotional directness in reaction to the lush romanticism of the late 19th century. Poulenc’s music is defined by its striking contrasts—at once playful and profound, elegant and deeply sincere. Though often associated with Gallic charm and irony, his later works reveal a more introspective, spiritual voice.

In the final years of his life, Poulenc envisioned a cycle of sonatas for woodwind instruments. He completed only three—for flute, clarinet, and oboe—before his death in 1963. Each is dedicated to the memory of a dear friend; the *Sonata for Oboe and Piano* bears the inscription “à la mémoire de Serge Prokofiev.” Poulenc deeply admired Prokofiev—particularly his percussive piano style—and was profoundly affected by his death. This sonata, Poulenc’s final completed work, stands as both a tribute and a final farewell.

Unusually, the work reverses the traditional fast–slow–fast structure, unfolding instead as slow–fast–slow. The opening movement, ***Élégie***, begins with a simple four-note motif in the oboe—solemn and prayer-like—which

serves as the movement's emotional thread. What follows is an intimate dialogue where moments of serenity give way to sudden surges of intensity, as if memories are being interrupted by waves of grief. Rather than a linear narrative, the movement feels like a meditation—searching, fragmented, and deeply human.

The second movement, *Scherzo*, provides a sharp, energetic contrast. Animated and rhythmically pointed in 6/8 meter, it carries unmistakable traces of Prokofiev's motoric energy. The piano drives the movement forward with toccata-like brilliance, while the oboe alternates between playful articulation and piercing, soaring lyricism in its upper register. A more expansive middle section briefly softens the intensity before the primary material returns abruptly, ending with a brusque, final gesture.

The final movement, *Déploration*, was described by Poulenc as a "liturgical chant." It opens in the dark sonority of A-flat minor with a haunting piano introduction. The oboe enters with a long, lamenting melody that spans the instrument's full range, embodying sorrow with striking intensity. Chromatic fragments recall the first movement, now more restless, building toward a restrained but powerful climax. Gradually, the music withdraws. A stark descending motif shared between the instruments fades into stillness, and the sonata closes suspended on a sustained E-flat—unresolved, breathless, and hauntingly quiet.

Concerto in A minor for Oboe and Strings

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Ralph Vaughan Williams was one of England's most influential 20th-century composers, known for a style that draws deeply from English folk song, hymnody, and the landscape of the British countryside. Yet his music is far more than pastoral nostalgia; beneath its luminous surfaces lies philosophical depth, spiritual searching, and a quiet, steely resilience.

The *Oboe Concerto* was composed in 1943–44, during the harrowing final years of World War II. Vaughan Williams was 72 years old and had recently completed his Fifth Symphony—a work widely perceived as offering hope and serenity to a nation in turmoil. The concerto was written for the legendary oboist Léon Goossens and was scheduled to premiere at the 1944 Promenade Concerts in London. However, when V-1 rocket attacks forced the cancellation of the season, the premiere was delayed and moved to Liverpool, Goossens' hometown.

Though often described as "pastoral," this concerto is a skillfully crafted, symphonic work that grants the oboe both lyrical beauty and significant emotional weight. The three movements are linked by a shared pentatonic theme that appears at the opening of each, creating a subtle cyclic unity.

The first movement, *Rondo Pastorale*, evokes open landscapes and spacious calm, yet it is marked *Allegro moderato* and contains moments of striking intensity. The oboe enters simply, presenting the main theme with understated clarity. As the movement unfolds, mercurial cadenzas and sweeping passages allow the soloist to display both lightness and expressive breadth. The movement closes with extraordinary stillness, the oboe seeming to hover in midair before gently releasing the final phrase.

The second movement, *Minuet and Musette*, serves as a dancing interlude. The title references both an 18th-century courtly dance and the French bagpipe (*musette*), whose characteristic drone is echoed in the oboe's sustained notes. The articulation is precise and playful, yet the movement carries an underlying gravity, pausing mid-thought before the finale begins.

The third movement, *Finale: Scherzo*, is the concerto's emotional core. Rapid, quicksilver passages propel the music with rhythmic vitality. Gradually, this restless motion gives way to a broad, hymn-like melody—one of the most transcendent passages in the oboe repertoire. Here, the oboe sings with soaring lyricism over a luminous accompaniment, transforming earlier fragments into something noble and searching. The concerto returns to a lighter motion, closing quietly, but the spiritual journey of the finale leaves a lasting resonance. Composed amid the uncertainty of war, the work offers not escapism, but a profound reflection on inward strength and quiet hope.