



# Hugh Hodgson School of Music

## UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

presents a  
Graduate Recital

**Amanda Withrow, *oboe***  
**Damon Denton, *piano***

November 6, 2024

4:30 pm, Edge Recital Hall

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Two Rhapsodies for oboe, viola, and piano

Charles M. Loeffler  
(1861-1935)

- I. L' Étang
- II. La Cornemuse

Rogelio Bonilla-Piedra, *viola*

*Intermission*

Oboe Concerto

Richard Strauss  
(1864-1949)

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Andante
- III. Vivace

*This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the degree Master of Music in  
Performance.*

*Amanda Withrow is a student of Dr. Reid Messich.*

*\*\* Out of respect for the performer, please silence all electronic devices  
throughout the performance.*

*Thank you for your cooperation.*

*\*\* For information on upcoming concerts, please see our website: [music.uga.edu](https://music.uga.edu)*

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As a celebrated American composer during the post-Romantic era, Charles Loeffler was renowned for orchestral tone poems, chamber music for unconventional ensembles, and the ability to create imagery through sound. Born to German parents, Loeffler spent his childhood in various areas of Europe including France, Switzerland, Hungary, and Russia, where his artistic interests were nurtured from an early age. As the son of a scientist and a writer, he was encouraged in his musical pursuits, taking violin lessons and being exposed to prominent literary figures and artists. This early involvement in the arts fueled his career-long passion for creating vivid imagery through sound. Political unrest in Europe during Loeffler's youth motivated his father to publicly voice his opposition of the Prussian government through writing, leading to his imprisonment, illness during his sentence, and subsequent death. Loeffler then distanced himself from his German roots, leading him to embrace a French identity, which significantly influenced his musical style.

Loeffler's compositional voice was a rich amalgamation of German, Hungarian, and French influences. He combined the sweeping melodies and textures of Brahms with the virtuosic density of Liszt, while drawing inspiration from Debussy's nature-infused soundscapes. At the same time, Loeffler sought to merge music with poetry, often looking to poets like Edgar Allan Poe and Walt Whitman for inspiration. After arriving in the United States in the 1880s to avoid any reminder of his German heritage, he quickly became associated with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, where he served as associate concertmaster and saw many of his works premiered.

The creative freedom Loeffler found in the U.S. allowed him to blend European styles with his own flare, establishing him as a bridge between European and American music. Although he was influenced by a wide range of composers, Loeffler remained devoted to programmatic music throughout his career. He prioritized evoking specific moods and imagery over traditional thematic development, striving to paint scenes and emotions with his compositions.

One such work that exemplifies Loeffler's affinity for unorthodox chamber ensembles and literary inspiration is *Two Rhapsodies for oboe, viola, and piano*, completed in 1901. Originally written for low voice, clarinet, viola, and piano, the piece was inspired by two poems written by Frenchman Maurice Rollinat. The instrumentation of this piece is rare, and the rich timbres of the oboe intertwine with the dark tone of the viola while blending with the piano to convey the unsettling atmosphere in Rollinat's poetry.

The opening of the first movement, *The Pond*, uses a variety of compositional techniques, such as blurred rhythmic motifs and the low ranges of the viola and piano, to conjure striking imagery of darkness, rippling water, and solitude, all while maintaining an underlying tension. Loeffler's use of medieval church modes represents the ancient fish that swim along "centuries-old reeds" in Rollinat's verse. Throughout the movement, the oboe and viola's alternation between solitary lines and unison passages reflect shifting moods of seclusion, hope, angst, respite, and unrest. The piano's recurring low, undulating figures create a surge, depicting the pond itself and giving the movement its brooding, heavy atmosphere.

In contrast, the second movement, *The Bagpipes*, is more rhapsodic and improvisatory in character. Deceptive harmonic progressions contribute to the sense of tonal ambiguity. With each new section's abrupt arrival, each instrument shifts mood dramatically. A flourishing theme heard in the oboe is played in various keys as the viola maintains a drone, representing the bagpipies that "groan in the woods as the wind that belleth." As the movement progresses, the frequent introduction of new melodic material in the oboe and viola increases its ambivalence through the uncertainty of the coming phrase. Its harmonic complexity is maintained through shifting tonal centers and numerous tonicizations within them, and the piece eventually resolves in a calm, reflective closure.

### ***L' Étang (The Pool)* by Maurice Rollinat**

Full of old fish, blind-stricken, long ago, the pool, under a near sky of rumbling dull thunder, bares between centuries-old rushes the splashing horror of its gloom.

Over yonder, goblins light up more than one marsh that is black, sinister, unbearable; but the pool is revealed in this lonely place only by the croakings of consumptive frogs.

Now the moon, piercing at this very moment, seems to look here at herself fantastically; as though, one might say, to see her spectral face, her flat nose, the strange faculty of teeth – a death's-head lighted from within, about to peer into a dull mirror.

### ***La Cornemuse (The Bagpipe)* by Maurice Rollinat**

His bagpipe groaned in the woods as the wind that belleth; and never has stag at bay, nor willow, nor oar, wept as that voice wept.

Those sounds of flute and hautboy seemed like the death-rattle of a woman. Oh! His bagpipe, near the cross-roads of the crucifix!

He is dead. But under cold skies, as soon as night weaves her mesh, down deep in my soul, there is the nook of old fears, I always hear his bagpipe groaning as of yore.

## Oboe Concerto

Richard Strauss  
(1864-1949)  
arr. Arthur Willner

Richard Strauss was an illustrious German composer of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, known for his large-scale orchestral works and symphonic poems. His father, Franz, was principal horn of the Munich Court Orchestra and exposed Richard to high-quality musicianship at a young age. A prolific, largely self-taught composer, Strauss wrote over 140 pieces by age 18 prior to higher education, with only formal music lessons on violin. Because of his father's connections, Strauss interacted with many notable musicians during his career, including conductor Hans von Bülow.

Among Strauss's musical influences was German composer Alexander Ritter, who encouraged Strauss's admiration of Wagner and urged him to study the work of Liszt. During his career, Strauss wrote grandiose tone poems and operas such as *Don Juan*, *Don Quixote*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, and *Salome*. Strauss gave musical life to the passionate characters of these stories, and he thoughtfully created delicate moments of chamber music within his orchestral work. For many years, the Nazi regime regarded Strauss as a national treasure, but his affiliation with Jewish musicians and relatives ended this recognition, which also resulted in monetary punishment. Strauss continued to compose despite societal and political difficulties. Toward the end of his life, he embodied the style of Mozart by refining his compositional approach and writing for smaller ensembles.

Demonstrating Strauss's later compositional endeavors, his *Oboe Concerto* was inspired by John de Lancie in 1945, who was a member of the United States Army and an oboist with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. de Lancie served as Staff Sergeant in the Office of Strategic Services in Bavaria at the end of World War II, which was also where Strauss spent his last years. During this time, de Lancie and other American musicians serving in the military visited the Strauss home to meet the esteemed composer. In one conversation, de Lancie commented on the many solos Strauss had written for the oboe in his orchestral repertoire and asked if he had considered writing an oboe concerto. Though Strauss simply responded, "No," he was motivated by de Lancie's inquiry, began writing the concerto, and completed the work later that year. Because de Lancie emboldened the work, Strauss granted him the privilege of performing the American premiere. After his service in the U. S. Army, de Lancie served as second oboist in the Philadelphia Orchestra, but management protocol prevented this performance with the Orchestra due to his junior status. Instead, Mitch Miller, principal oboist of the Columbia Broadcasting System Orchestra and close friend of de Lancie, premiered the work in a radio broadcast in 1948.

In three continuous movements, the concerto includes melodic quotes from Strauss's tone poems *Don Juan* and *Don Quixote*. Though the piece is not inherently programmatic, each movement conveys many characters and emotions that aid the performer's effort to create a story. The first movement, in its perpetual opening, illustrates hope and dreams of the future, with elegant flourishes and melodies soaring through the full range of the instrument. After a seamless transition, the second movement expresses vulnerability and affection with a simple melody that returns often, comforting the listener with familiarity and warmth. The cadenza creates a sense of uncertainty and concern through tonal shifts and dramatic pauses, leaving the listener wondering

what is to come before a luxuriant scale sweeps into the third movement, bursting in excitement and relief that remains until the warm, joyful conclusion.

Like the oboe solos in Strauss's other works, this concerto requires strong mental and physical endurance of the oboist. The task to portray a tale of love, hope, and wonder coupled with drawn-out phrases makes the piece one of the most daunting in the repertoire. By combining Classical forms and standard tonalities while leaving the story unspecified, Strauss inspires the performer through this provocative concerto to shape their own characters and achieve the same level of narrative nuance that he expertly formed in his collective repertoire.