



Hugh Hodgson School of Music

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

presents a
Graduate Recital

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

November 6, 2026

5:30 pm, Ramsey Recital Hall

Oboe Concerto in C minor

- I. *Allegro moderato*
- II. *Adagio*
- III. *Allegro*

Alessandro Marcello
(1673-1747)

Suite Française sur des thèmes du XVII siècle

- I. *Pavane*
- II. *Gaillarde*
- III. *Gigue*
- IV. *Rigaudon*

Marcel Bitsch
(1921-2011)

Brief Intermission

Autumn Night (2021)

Eric Ewazen
(b. 1954)

Four Personalities (2007)

- I. Yellow
- II. White
- III. Blue
- IV. Red

Alyssa Morris
(b. 1984)

*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

Oboe Concerto in C minor

Alessandro Marcello

The history of Alessandro Marcello's *Oboe Concerto* is nearly as intriguing as the music itself. Born into a noble Venetian family, Alessandro and his younger brother Benedetto both became composers, though their musical careers followed different paths. While Benedetto devoted himself more extensively to composition and ultimately achieved greater recognition, Alessandro balanced music with poetry, philosophy, mathematics, painting, and the responsibilities of Venetian civic life. Despite his relatively small musical output, his *Oboe Concerto* has endured as one of the most beloved works of the Baroque oboe repertoire.

The concerto's path to the modern stage is surprisingly tangled. Versions survive in both D minor and C minor, and over the centuries the work has been attributed variously to Alessandro Marcello, Benedetto Marcello, and even Antonio Vivaldi. The C-minor version performed today was long associated with Benedetto, inspiring colorful stories of rivalry between the two musical brothers. Although the historical evidence does not support every detail of these legends, scholarship now securely identifies Alessandro as the composer of the original D-minor concerto, with the familiar C-minor version generally understood as a transposition of that work.

The concerto soon attracted another remarkable admirer: Johann Sebastian Bach. Around 1713–14, Bach transcribed the entire work for solo harpsichord as BWV 974, transforming the comparatively simple melody of the second movement with elaborate ornamentation. His version offers a valuable glimpse into Baroque performance practice, when musicians were expected to embellish the written page with trills, turns, flourishes, and other expressive decorations. For modern oboists, Bach's transcription has become more than a historical curiosity; its ornamentation continues to inform interpretations of Marcello's *Adagio* more than three centuries later.

The opening *Allegro moderato* is stately without becoming heavy, unfolding through an elegant exchange between soloist and strings. Calls and responses move across the ensemble as the oboe alternates between lyrical phrases and agile passagework. The *Adagio* turns inward. Above the steady pulse of the strings and continuo, the oboe traces a long, yearning melody whose simplicity creates space for ornamentation and expressive freedom. Each embellishment can intensify a dissonance, delay a resolution, or reshape the direction of a phrase, allowing the performer to become an active participant in bringing Marcello's written line to life.

The final *Allegro* breaks that stillness with bright, dance-like energy. Nearly continuous sixteenth-note passages propel the music forward, demanding both dexterity and lightness from the soloist as ideas pass rapidly between oboe and ensemble. After the introspection of the *Adagio*, the finale restores the concerto's brilliance and momentum, carrying the work to an animated close.

Perhaps it is fitting that a concerto so firmly established in the oboe repertoire should have such a fluid history. It has traveled between two keys and two brothers, survived a mistaken attribution to Vivaldi, passed through Bach's hands, and been continually reshaped through the ornamentation of generations of performers. Yet beneath that complicated history lies the quality that has allowed the work to endure: Marcello gives the oboe opportunities not only to display its agility and brilliance, but also to do what it does perhaps better than any other instrument—to sing.

Suite Française sur des thèmes du XVII siècle

Marcel Bitsch

Marcel Bitsch was a French composer, theorist, and pedagogue whose career was closely tied to the Paris Conservatoire. Born in Paris in 1921, he studied composition with Henri Büsser and harmony and counterpoint with Jean and Noël Gallon, later receiving the prestigious Grand Prix de Rome. In 1956, he returned to the Conservatoire as professor of counterpoint and fugue, a position he held for more than three decades. His career reflected a fascination with musical structure and craft, evident not only in his compositions but also in his theoretical writings and carefully annotated editions of works by Johann Sebastian Bach.

Published in 1964, *Suite Française sur des thèmes du XVII^e siècle* (“French Suite on 17th-Century Themes”) brings that historical awareness into conversation with a distinctly modern musical voice. Rather than attempting to recreate the sound of the Baroque era, Bitsch looks backward through a 20th-century lens, drawing upon four historical dances—*Pavane*, *Gaillarde*, *Gigue*, and *Rigaudon*—while surrounding them with colorful harmony, rhythmic intricacy, and virtuosic writing for the oboe. The result is music that can sound simultaneously centuries old and unmistakably modern.

The opening *Pavane* takes its character from a slow, dignified processional dance that flourished in European courts during the Renaissance and early Baroque periods. Bitsch preserves its stately bearing, but the elegance of the older dance is colored by a more modern harmonic language. The *Gaillarde* provides an immediate contrast. Traditionally a lively dance in triple meter, it replaces the restraint of the *Pavane* with buoyant rhythms and a lighter, more animated exchange between oboe and piano.

The *Gigue* pushes the suite toward greater rhythmic vitality. Descended from the jig and characterized by its lively compound meter, the dance becomes a vehicle for quick articulation and agile passagework, with the oboe and piano sharing in its restless momentum. The concluding *Rigaudon* is even more exuberant. Originally a lively French folk and court dance, its characteristic energy and leaping gestures are transformed into athletic writing for the oboe, bringing the suite to a brilliant and playful conclusion.

Throughout *Suite Française*, Bitsch treats the past not as something to reproduce, but as material to reinvent. The recognizable character of each dance provides the framework, while modern harmony, rhythmic precision, and instrumental virtuosity continually reshape it. In doing so, Bitsch creates a musical dialogue across centuries: the manners and movements of an earlier France remain visible, but beneath them speaks the unmistakable voice of the 20th century.

Autumn Night

Eric Ewazen

American composer Eric Ewazen is known for his musical language that is unabashedly lyrical, colorful, and accessible. A graduate of the Eastman School of Music and The Juilliard School, he has written extensively for winds and brass, often drawing upon the distinctive colors and expressive possibilities of individual instruments. His music combines a contemporary harmonic language with a strong sense of melody, reflecting his belief in music’s ability to communicate directly with performers and audiences.

Autumn Night for oboe and piano is a brief musical portrait of Ewazen’s favorite season. Rather than telling a specific story, the work captures the atmosphere of what the composer describes as a crisp, cool, clear autumn evening. Color is central to this image, making the oboe—with its remarkable ability to shift between brilliant, plaintive, warm, and mysterious sonorities—a natural voice for the scene. Ewazen imagines its more animated gestures as wind stirring through autumn leaves, while softer passages suggest the fading warmth of summer and the first arrival of colder air.

The piano does far more than accompany this landscape. Flowing arpeggios create a shimmering backdrop while oboe and piano continually exchange swirling gestures, sometimes moving independently and at other times joining in broad lyrical phrases. The music shifts fluidly between animation and stillness: an oboe line may emerge gently from the piano texture, gather energy as if caught by a gust of wind, and then settle again into quiet reflection. Despite these changing moods, melody remains at the heart of the work; as Ewazen describes it, the two instruments are “always singing.”

In *Autumn Night*, the season is portrayed not simply through falling leaves and brilliant colors, but through its sense of transition. Warmth and chill, motion and stillness, radiance and mystery coexist within the same musical landscape. The result is less a depiction of autumn than an impression of what an autumn evening feels like—a fleeting moment of beauty poised between the warmth of the season passing and the quiet anticipation of what comes next.

Four Personalities

Alyssa Morris

American composer and oboist Alyssa Morris has built much of her compositional voice around the expressive possibilities of wind instruments, particularly the oboe. Her music frequently draws inspiration from ideas beyond music—from visual art and literature to human emotion and personality—and translates them into vivid musical characters. Her writing combines classical traditions with a particular affinity for jazz, creating music that is colorful, rhythmically engaging, and immediately expressive.

Morris composed *Four Personalities* in 2007 while completing her undergraduate degree, originally writing the work for her own senior oboe recital. Encouraged by her teacher, GERALYN GIOVANNETTI, Morris shared the piece with renowned oboist Nancy Ambrose King, who performed it at the 2008 International Double Reed Society convention. Morris has credited that performance and its international exposure with helping launch her career as a composer. What began as a piece written by a young oboist for a milestone recital has since become one of Morris's most widely performed works.

The four movements draw inspiration from the Hartman Personality Profile, which associates four colors with distinct motivations and character traits. Rather than simply assigning a mood to each color, Morris gives each personality its own musical identity, allowing the oboe and piano to embody its strengths, impulses, and contradictions.

Yellow is driven by joy—the simple pleasure of doing something for the sake of doing it. Fun-loving and spontaneous, this personality comes to life through a *Fast Swing*, filled with syncopated rhythms, jazz-inflected harmonies, and playful exchanges between oboe and piano.

White is the peacekeeper: kind, adaptable, and a good listener, but also prone to indecision. Its gentler character is repeatedly interrupted by moments of hesitation, as though the music itself is reconsidering which direction to take.

Blue brings loyalty, sincerity, thoughtfulness, and a desire to serve others; it is motivated by intimacy, meaningful relationships, and a sense of purpose. Appropriately, Morris gives Blue the work's most inward and expressive music. It was also the first movement she composed; at the time, she was deeply affected by the sorrow of Francis Poulenc's *Sonata for Oboe and Piano* and sought to understand how music could evoke a similarly powerful emotional response. The oboe's long, searching lines give this personality a sense of sincerity and emotional depth.

Red brings an abrupt change of character. Motivated by power, Red is aggressive and assertive, but also visionary, confident, and proactive. Morris translates that determination into music marked *Steady and relentless*, driving oboe and piano forward with rhythmic intensity and an almost unwavering sense of purpose. Its force and momentum carry *Four Personalities* to a bold and exhilarating conclusion.

Across *Four Personalities*, contrast becomes a source of connection. Yellow brings joy, White seeks peace, Blue values relationships and purpose, and Red moves forward with confidence and determination. No single personality encompasses everything; together, however, their differences create a richer and more complete whole. As the final work on this recital, that idea carries particular meaning for me. I have been shaped by teachers and mentors who challenged me, colleagues who inspired me, friends who encouraged me, and family who supported me through every stage of the journey. Each has brought different strengths, perspectives, and personalities into my life, leaving an imprint on both the musician and person I have become. It seems fitting, then, to close this final recital not with a single musical personality, but with many.