

# Bard College Conservatory of Music

*presents*

**Final Recital**

**Michał Cieřlik, *oboe***

Saturday, April 27th, 2024, at 8:00 PM

László Z. Bitó '60 Conservatory Performance Space

**Nocturne, Op. 62, No.1**

**F. Chopin**

(1810 - 1849)

Kevin Kenner, *Piano*

Rhayne Batista, *Projections*

**Sonata for Oboe and Piano, Op. 85**

**Y. Bowen**

*I. Allegretto Gracioso*

(1945)

*II. Andantino espressivo*

*III. Allegro gracioso*

Pei-Hsuan Shen, *Piano*

Rhayne Batista, *Projections*

## Intermission

### **I've Been Learning to Drive My Whole Life**

**R. Batista**

(2021)

Rhayne Batista, *Projections*

### **Interlude for Oboe and String Quartet**

**G. Finzi**

(1933 - 1936)

Yuchen Zhao, *Violin 1*

Lap Yin Lee, *Violin 2*

Jessica Ward, *Viola*

Grace Molinaro, *Cello*

Rhayne Batista, *Projections*

### **Sonata for Oboe and Piano**

**H. Howells**

(1942)

*I. Placido, teneramente, ma con moto*

*II. Lento, assai espressivo e tranquillo*

*III. Allegro mosso, scherzando*

*IV. Tranquillo, mesto, ma con moto*

Kevin Kenner, *Piano*

Rhayne Batista, *Projections*

## About the Artists

**Michał Cieślík** is an oboist studying oboe performance and computer science at Bard College Conservatory of Music with Elaine Douvas, Ryan Roberts, and Alexandra Knoll. He has performed as the principal oboist with the New World Symphony, New World School of the Arts Orchestra and College Orchestra, and Bard College Conservatory Orchestra under the baton of Leon Botstein and Tan Dun, as well as numerous solo performances in Supraśl, Białystok, and Cracow in Poland. Michał graduated from New World School of the Arts in Miami, Florida, where he studied with James Riggs.

Michał's transcriptions of the F. Chopin Nocturnes Op. 9 have recently been published at PWM, the official publishing company for Chopin works, and professionally recorded with Kevin Kenner. The published works will be commercially available soon.

**Rhayne Batista '23** is a filmmaker, screenwriter and video artist who recently graduated from Bard College, having studied Film and Electronic Arts, Film History, and Art History. Her work centers around themes of innocence, transience, and plus-size female sexuality, especially as these relate to growing up a digital native. Her senior project, a 38-minute narrative film titled *I've Been Learning to Drive My Whole Life*, uses the space of a car across two road-trips to dissect the evolution of a mother and daughter's relationship. She has produced a small oeuvre of found-footage video installations featuring the use of CGI "Giantess Growth" porn as a means of scrutinizing our mass culture's attitude toward plus-size bodies, and the processes of internalizing and unlearning these stigmas as plus-size woman herself.

Rhayne now works as a projectionist for the IFC Center in New York City, thanks, in large part, to her undergraduate experience projecting 35mm, 16mm, and Digital Cinema for the Bard Center for Moving Image Arts/Bard Film Department, and expertise in Audio Visual equipment gained from studying Video Installation and Film Production at Bard.

**Kevin Kenner** has taught piano at the FROST SCHOOL OF MUSIC since 2015. His students have successfully pursued careers as performers, recording artists and pedagogues, many garnering major prizes at prestigious piano competitions worldwide. Professor Kenner's artistry has been internationally recognized by a number of prestigious awards. He won top prize at the International Chopin Competition in Warsaw, the International Terrence Judd Award in London, and third prize at the Tchaikovsky International Competition in Moscow.

Professor Kenner has also been invited to serve on the juries of some of the most celebrated international piano competitions, including the Chopin, the Busoni, Sydney, and Hong Kong competitions.

Violinist **Yuchen Zhao** is a second-year Instrumental Arts Program graduate student at the Bard Conservatory. Last spring he served as the concertmaster for the Bard Conservatory Orchestra with Maestro Tan Dun at Fisher Center. He graduated from Zhenjiang Conservatory of Music where he served as first concertmaster with the Philharmonic Angel Orchestra. Yuchen has won many recent competition honors, including a silver award at the Alba Music Competition, gold award at the Royal Music Competition, and bronze award at the New Talent Music Competition.

**Lap Yin Lee** studies violin performance at the Bard College Conservatory with Yiwen Jiang, with a second major in economics. In 2015, he participated in "Share the Stage" with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra under Maestro Christoph Eschenbach's baton, and performed Ravel's La Valse. Before he transferred to Bard College, he studied at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. Lap Yin worked with many conductors, including Jaap Van Zweden, Tan Dun, Leon Botstein, Liu Kuok Man, Nabil Shehata, Patrick Furrer, and Michael Cousteau.

**Jessica Ward**, from Maryland, is in her third year at Bard, where she studies viola with Brian Hong and is pursuing a second degree in architecture. Jessica has been playing the viola for fifteen years and has enjoyed playing chamber music since starting the instrument. She has also partnered with international music festivals during orchestra tours to Chile and Italy. Jessica has had the privilege of studying viola privately with Tsuna Sakamoto, Jennifer Mondie, and Molly Carr.

**Grace Molinaro** is in her final year at Bard College Conservatory, majoring in cello performance and Middle Eastern Studies (with Arabic). She currently studies cello with Peter Wiley, having previously studied with Raman Ramakrishnan. She hails from the Washington, D.C. area, where she was taught by members of the military bands. She also performs as a member of the Ictus Quartet from Arlington, Virginia. Grace has participated in a variety of chamber and orchestral groups at Bard. She hopes to engage further with the Middle Eastern Maqamat classical system.



## Program Notes

Each of the pieces in this recital was carefully curated to represent the increasing emotional complexity of one's life in both harmonic and aesthetic respect. This recital explores the experience of growing up from the simplicities of youth to adulthood through the varying styles of Chopin, York Bowen, Finzi, and Howells. Cieslik begins the recital by depicting the lucidity of childhood through the classical stylings of Chopin and then the loss and attempts to fight for that simplicity through the sonatas of York Bowen. The narrative of the recital continues with a Finzi interlude, whose dissonance and venture into atonality depict the era of mourning and the eventual acceptance of one's loss of childhood. The concluding section of the recital takes the audience through the absurd practice of accepting life's uncertainty and the acceptance of change through sonatas by Herbert Howells. The musical pieces will each be accompanied by a video installation that echoes the narrative in color, pacing, source material, and tone.

**Chopin's Nocturne Op. 62, No. 1**, with its coherent and recognizable melodies, encapsulates the safety of structure and the beauty of childhood memories. These pieces evoke a sense of order and control, reassuring the audience of a proscribed path forward. Chopin's familiarity alludes to a storybook with a clear narrative, where the experiences of reality are implied, but through the abstracted starkness of unencumbered youth.

This simplicity is thus echoed in the projected art installation, which centers on the still image of the Seurat painting 'A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte' accompanied by simple movement from the 1995 film 'Kids.'

Movement one of **York Bowen's Oboe Sonata, Op. 85** begins our foray into dissonance, though only slightly, still upholding the structural security that was provided by the Chopin pieces. Moments of growing complexity are calmed by harmony and still feel in line with an overall feeling of nostalgia. This piece is

exemplary of the act of contextualizing, often associated with early adolescence.

The second movement plays more into the melodrama of young adulthood, its heartbreaks, and hitherto unknown melancholy. This movement leans toward the dramatic, though still maintaining a lightness in terms of emotional weight. The painful, dissonant intervals are glossed over for the purpose of lightness. The tone here echoes the emotions commonly felt by young adults; extremely honest yet perhaps not very self aware.

Finally, the third movement complicates the story a step more. As in the previous movements, the atonality and dissonance get glossed over to reach a point of tonality, but this time, the dissonant sections seep to the forefront. For example, in the first phase of this movement, there are two attempts at fanfare that each end with bizarre, dissonant chords from the piano as if losing their way. Ultimately, the hero believes that they have overcome the uncertainties of life.

The video accompaniment in this section moves beyond still images, increasing in complexity and overlapping melancholic movie moments in blues and greens. The imagery also begins to deepen along with the musical movements, with colors becoming darker and more varied and the correlation between images becoming more disjointed.

As the recital takes a reprieve to reflect on the past and wonder about the future, the **I've Been Learning to Drive My Whole Life** introduces overlaid audio-visual physical and emotional landscapes to simulate the sensation of "floating" or "flying" home, and all the memories, musings, and anxieties associated with journeying home. Featuring audio recordings by Bard Colleg students.

**Finzi's Interlude Op. 21** ushers in an era of doubt and anger. While its atonality stands on an even keel with the York Bowen pieces, the dissonance of this piece is given more time to be laid bare and vulnerable. In painful weeps or tired resignation,

each dissonant note seems to be a sore spot. These moments are a reminder of the loss of childhood, which are followed by more intricate, adult concerns. As the narrative takes on a mournful heaviness, the heaviness of the orchestration follows suit with the stage holding five players at once, amplifying the emotional climax of the recital.

The projection during this piece, much like the music itself, begins to reprise some of the imagery we have seen previously, this time from a more uncertain or bleak perspective. Moments of cinematic “breaking points”, climaxes or moments when the proverbial ‘floodgates are opened’ are layered open one another, increasing in fervor along with the instruments.

The movements of **Howells’ Oboe Sonata** outline the journey from mourning to acceptance, the revelry within the absurd, and the alternating between moments of structure and lack of structure. The first movement begins in a dark, uncertain place, coming off the heels of the Finzi piece. The lack of structure in this section exemplifies the anxiety one feels about finding stability and one’s place in the world. Between stretches of meandering, constant movement, and stumbling are some of the most gentle and free moments within the recital as a whole. Often, these moments are followed by rapid aggressiveness in tone, depicting a large breadth of emotions within seconds. The lack of a clear structure is frightening, but as the movement will prove, at times, utterly freeing.

The second movement takes a beat to bask in relaxation, emphasized by the light and floating nature of the piece. The oboe does not force tonality to emerge but rather accidentally falls into it, accepting dissonant notes as they appear without ceremony. The heaviness of grasping for structure and rationalization is shed and replaced by the relinquishing of control.

The third movement expands upon the freedom in the uncertainty and the exploration of absurdity. Continuously changing rhythm and melody, this movement is fast, exciting, and unpredictable. Wild dances increase in intensity and reach ecstatic explosions. These same themes return later, this time satisfied with having

explored these fancies. Drawing on Albert Camus' absurd hero, the notion that anything can happen (both creatively and emotionally) is a daunting one, but equally an exciting one. The end of this movement takes a quieter moment, reflecting upon earlier themes with a question: Has this ecstatic experience changed anything?

In the wake of the ecstasy of the third movement, the fourth movement begins with a softness. The questions return, and the cycle of musical themes begins again. The first movement is reiterated here, except this time, the oboe comes in late as if pausing to think to ask the same question more eloquently. The music takes on a dream-like, ethereal quality in this section, moments referencing the second movement. The sections of aggression from the first movement are withheld from this repetition cycle, implying that uncertainties and anxieties will always return, but one will find a sense of peace in accepting this as a part of the nature of freedom. The third movement ends and concludes the recital in a deeply-deserved state of acceptance.

The video installation follows the narrative of Howells' pieces, beginning with a disjointed experimental piece entitled 'Dots.' There is a complete lack of narrative structure here that mirrors that of the first movement, and there is anxiety in this lack. However, in the transition to the second movement, the imagery plays with landscapes, modern spiritual symbols, and the joys found when boundaries and confines are removed. The dance referred to in the third movement and spastic joy is echoed in a ballet performance of 'The Red Shoes,' layered with more experimental shots, lights, and textures. As with the musical themes, here in the fourth movement, we find a return to the peace of the second, a reiteration of blue tones and cityscapes.