

FRANCIS POULENC'S *SONATA FOR HORN, TRUMPET AND TROMBONE*: A
STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS IDENTIFYING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE, FORM AND
IMPLICATIONS FOR PERFORMANCE

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Research has been conducted on Francis Poulenc and his prominent 20th century sonata for brass instruments. Poulenc and members of the French compositional collaboration known as *Les Six* have all been subjects of research.

Francis Poulenc's *Sonata for Horn Trumpet and Trombone* is a crucial piece in the development of brass chamber music during the 20th century. As one of the first works written for modern brass instruments, it demonstrates a highly crafted compositional style representative of Poulenc's early period.

Research includes background and historical significance of the Sonata, analysis of form and compositional techniques, biographical information on Francis Poulenc and the members of *Les Six* and a section on implications for the performance of the work.

This study is necessary due to the lack of research available for the piece especially considering its relevance to the development of brass chamber music. This study explores the compositional style of Francis Poulenc and his contribution to the brass ensemble repertoire.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Francis Poulenc's *Sonata for Horn, Trumpet and Trombone* was composed at the end of Poulenc's first stylistic period in 1922. The *Sonata* was the last in a set of wind sonatas that included the *Sonata for Two Clarinets* (1918) and the *Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon* (1922). Poulenc never used the same instrumentation for any two of his instrumental works, and he can be viewed along with many of his contemporaries who experimented with different instrumental combinations, especially wind sonorities, reduced textures and a stark exposed style.¹

The fact that Poulenc wrote very few works for large ensemble or orchestra was considered to be a revolt against the lush textures and massive scale that typified the excess of the late Romantic era and early 20th century.² The French literary figurehead Jean Cocteau expressed the need for a new direction in the fine arts in France, to depart from Romantic traditions and establish a new French style.³ Cocteau is often given credit for being the first to refer to the group of composers known as *Les Six*, which included Poulenc.⁴ Pursuing a structural and historical analysis of the *Sonata* will show that Poulenc achieved this departure from Romantic traditions and in doing so dramatically impacted the development of modern brass chamber music.

Poulenc was influenced greatly by Erik Satie and incorporated many of his compositional techniques in the *Sonata*. This influence manifests itself in the *Sonata* through Poulenc's use of modest dimensions, reduced textures and repetition, particularly in the accompanimental

¹ Gary C. Mortenson, 1986. "Historical Perspectives and Analytical Observations on Francis Poulenc's *Sonata* (1922)". *International Trumpet Guild*. Vol. 10, No. 3: 10-13.

² *Ibid.*, 10.

³ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

figures.⁵ Fellow *Les Six* member Darius Milhaud commented on this influence saying “(Poulenc) has renewed in chamber music the brevity of Scarlatti’s sonatas. The elements are here reduced to their minimum.”⁶

Poulenc dedicated the *Sonata* to his childhood friend Mademoiselle Raymonde Linossier who held a special place in the lives of many of her friends and most particularly in the life of Poulenc. Throughout his life Poulenc kept a photograph of Linossier in a frame on his work table, and took it with him when he traveled.⁷ Years later, in a letter to Marie-Banche de Polignac, he described a cigarette case “which never left Raymonde, and which never leaves me now. On all the important nights of my career, I like to feel it in my hand.”⁸ There is record of an active relationship between the Poulenc and Linossier families, yet there is very little existing correspondence between the two friends and the details of their relationship remains somewhat of a mystery.

Current State of Research

There are several sources that refer to the *Sonata* as an example for the analysis of the compositional styles of Poulenc and the other members of *Les Six*. However, few sources contain an in depth analysis of the *Sonata*. Many biographical studies of Poulenc and *Les Six* refer to the *Sonata* as an example of Poulenc’s early style but do not go into deeper analysis of the work or establish its significance to the world of brass chamber music.

⁵ Benjamin Ivry. *Francis Poulenc, 20th-century composers*. London: Phaidon, 1996. 94.

⁶ Gary C. Mortenson, 1986. “Historical Perspectives and Analytical Observations on Francis Poulenc’s *Sonata* (1922)”. *International Trumpet Guild*. Vol. 10, No. 3: 10-13.

⁷ Henri Hell. *Francis Poulenc*. New York: Grove Press, 1959. 139.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 140

Poulenc's original manuscript of the *Sonata* is held at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Département de la Musique in Paris, France.⁹ Current research is limited to two editions of the piece published in 1945 and 1951 respectively by the J. & W. Chester Ltd. in London, England.

Four dissertation sources covering subject matter related to the *Sonata* exist; however, only one devotes more than a few pages specifically to the piece.¹⁰ Pamela Poulin's dissertation titled "Three Stylistic Traits in Poulenc's Chamber Works for Wind Instruments" contains a section dealing with Poulenc's early works, eight pages of which are devoted to the *Sonata*.¹¹ This section is particularly helpful in understanding the key centers of the various movements and isolated sections within each movement. Poulin analyzes the work in terms of form and tonal centers followed by a discussion of intra-movement and inter-movement tonal relationships.¹² Poulin's outline of thematic material and its repetition provides a perspective on the proportions of the piece in terms of priority given to specific themes or harmonic structures.¹³

Gary Mortenson's article entitled "Historical Perspectives and Analytical Observations on Francis Poulenc's *Sonata* (1922)" for a 1986 installment of the *International Trumpet Guild* journal is perhaps the most concise of any scholarly source available that deals with the *Sonata*. Mortenson's analysis is introduced with general background on Poulenc and *Les Six* but quickly shifts to a more concentrated focus on the theoretical characteristics of the *Sonata*.

Keith W. Daniel's book, *Francis Poulenc, His Artistic Development and Musical Style*, addresses the *Sonata* as an exemplary piece but does not go into detail on harmonic construction

⁹ Oxford University *Catalogue of Music*. Oxford Press, England. 1995. P. 223.

¹⁰ Pamela L. Poulin, "Three Stylistic Traits in Poulenc's Chamber Works for Wind Instruments." Thesis (Ph. D.)--Eastman School of Music, 1983.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹² Pamela L. Poulin, "Three Stylistic Traits in Poulenc's Chamber Works for Wind Instruments". Thesis (Ph. D.)--Eastman School of Music, 1983.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 63

or the use of repetition.¹⁴ Regarding general stylistic traits in much of Poulenc's chamber music, Daniel himself states:

...the music is concise without being bare, simple without being trivial and well structured without being monotonously repetitious. It was likely these qualities that prompted Milhaud in 1927 to call it a true masterpiece...He (Poulenc) was not interested in dissecting his themes into their component parts and working with new permutations and combinations of these parts (cellular writing involves self-sufficient motives rather than fragments of larger themes.) He preferred to repeat his themes, to restate them in a new key and/or with different scoring or accompaniment or to move immediately to another contrasting idea, perhaps returning at a later time. Microform tends, therefore, to be episodic, with the themes or sections following one another in sequence.¹⁵

Several books address the *Sonata* in a manner similar to the text by Keith Daniel.

Examples of similar sources include Henri Hell's biographical study, *Francis Poulenc*, which addresses the socio-economic atmosphere of Poulenc's career and the composers of *Les Six*.¹⁶

Also considered is Sidney Buckland's, *Francis Poulenc: Music, Art and Literature*, which discusses additional cultural idioms that likely influenced Poulenc at the time that he was composing the *Sonata*.¹⁷ Sources relating to Poulenc's songs, such as Vivian Lee Poates Wood's book, *Poulenc's Songs: An analysis of Style*, and Pierre Bernac's book, *Francis Poulenc, The Man and His Songs*, provide insight into the lyrical style throughout the *Sonata*.

Deeper analysis of musical elements has been applied in this study with the aid of the sources previously mentioned as well as personal interpretations. It should be noted that these interpretations are based upon studying recordings by some of the world's finest brass players who provide a variety of interpretations. Recordings that have been used in this study include *Poulenc: Chamber Music*, featuring Alan Civil, French Horn, John Wilbraham, Trumpet and

¹⁴ Keith W. Daniel, *Francis Poulenc, His Artistic Development and Musical Style*. Studies in musicology, no. 52. Ann Arbor, Mich: UMI Research Press, 1982.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁶ Henri Hell. *Francis Poulenc*. New York: Grove Press, 1959.

¹⁷ Sidney Buckland and Myriam Chimènes. *Francis Poulenc: Music, Art, and Literature*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999.

John Iveson, Trombone (2001), *German Brass*, featuring Wolfgang Gaag, French Horn, Konradin Groth, Trumpet and Enrique Crespo, Trombone (2004), and *Thomas Stevens, Trumpet*, featuring John Cerminaro, French Horn, Thomas Stevens, Trumpet and Ralph Sauer, Trombone (1996).

Purpose

This study is an exposition of the historical significance of the *Sonata* to the world of brass chamber music and examines qualities of Francis Poulenc's compositional style. These qualities include the simplification of melodic and harmonic material and the employment of reduced instrumentation. Despite the thinner instrumentation, the *Sonata* is capable of creating a musical impact on par with a more densely orchestrated work.¹⁸

As one of the first works written for modern brass instruments, the *Sonata* has had a significant influence on brass chamber music since its composition in 1922.¹⁹ The *Sonata* is one of the most revered works for brass and is playable by advanced students and professionals alike.

¹⁸ Ibid., 101.

¹⁹ Arthur G. Swift. "Twentieth-Century Brass Ensemble Music A Survey with Analyses of Representative Compositions". Thesis (Ph.D.)--University of Iowa. 1970. 209.

FRANCIS POULENC BIOGRAPHY

Francis Jean Marcel Poulenc was born into a wealthy family of pharmaceutical manufacturers in Paris, France on January 7, 1899.²⁰ He composed music in all major genres including art song, chamber music, oratorio, opera, and ballet music. His mother, an amateur pianist, taught him to play and helped to establish music as an important component of his life.

Through his early study, Poulenc came to love Schubert's *Die Winterreise* and was impressed by the early Stravinsky ballets. He also attempted to perform the *Three Piano Pieces* by Schönberg.²¹ However, it was a performance by eminent pianist Eduard Risler of the "Idylle" from Chabrier's *Dix Pièces pittoresques* that inspired the 14 year old Poulenc to become a composer.²²

Poulenc's mother died in 1916 at the age of 50 and his father followed in 1917. Neither of his parents had heard a performance of any of his compositions. Poulenc's first work to receive a performance was *Rapsodie nègre* for baritone and chamber ensemble, given in December 1917 and arousing more than polite interest from both Stravinsky and Diaghilev.²³ The middle movement of the five is a setting of the poem "Makoko Kangourou", which is dedicated to Erik Satie.

Poulenc's first encounters with Satie proved to be formative in Poulenc's development as a composer. Through this relationship, Poulenc was urged to join the ostentatiously self-descriptive musical group called the Nouveaux Jeunes (New Youths). In a gratuitous parallel with the Russian Five, the French critic Henri Collet dubbed the New Youths *Le Groupe de Six*,

²⁰ Wilfrid Mellers. *Francis Poulenc*. Oxford studies of composers. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. 14.

²¹ Ibid., 15.

²² Benjamin Ivry. *Francis Poulenc. 20th-century composers*. London: Phaidon, 1996. 94.

²³ Ibid., 15.

and the label stuck under the designation *Les Six*.²⁴ The six musicians included Poulenc, Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, and Germaine Tailleferre. Although quite different in their styles of composition and artistic inclinations, they participated collectively in various musical events, with each of the composers insisting that the group had no communal musical aims.²⁵ In any case, the label was convenient for publicity purposes and for Jean Cocteau, their self-appointed spokesman, who was quick to capitalize on the possibilities brought about by the title.

As it happened, Poulenc's *Suite in C* for piano fit Cocteau's prescription quite well – they are clear, light-hearted and entertaining.²⁶ However, the *Promenades*, written in 1921 for Arthur Rubinstein, represent a more serious side of Poulenc which was already struggling to make itself heard. The *Promenades* explores a number of the new musical techniques which were intriguing to composers of the 1920s, and the resulting language must have seemed unusual to pianists of the time.²⁷

From 1918 to 1921 Poulenc served in the French army but continued his study of piano. The year 1918 saw Poulenc not only performing his National Service but composing his *Three Miniatures*.²⁸ The *Sonata for Piano Duet* owes something to Stravinsky, but the *Sonata for Two Clarinets* is a wholly original conception, both in respect of the medium and the use Poulenc makes of it. The third work from 1918 was the set of *Trois mouvements perpétuels*, played for the first time in public in February 1919 which later swept the drawing-rooms of Europe.²⁹ Here the Parisian and provincial elements in Poulenc's make-up jostle each other, with occasional

²⁴ Ibid., 101.

²⁵ George Russell Keck. *Francis Poulenc: A Bio-Bibliography*. Bio-bibliographies in music, no. 28. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990. 56.

²⁶ Ibid., 59.

²⁷ Ibid., 59.

²⁸ Wilfrid Mellers. *Francis Poulenc*. Oxford studies of composers. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. 16.

²⁹ Ibid., 17.

attempts at coalescence: the tunes are superbly naïve (Ravel envied Poulenc's ability "to write his own folksongs"), while the little flourishes with which each piece "signs off" are the epitome of urbane irony.³⁰

In a letter from Bela Bartók, the composer stated that he looked forward to seeing longer pieces from Poulenc's pen, as though he knew Poulenc to be capable of them.³¹ Bartók suggested that Poulenc's melodies always carried with them a strong implication of the accompanying harmony (something he perhaps owed to his early love of Schubert), and that although his *Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon* of 1922 is linear in conception, we hear a continuous part in our mind, and Poulenc is able to play jokes by cheating our expectations.³²

Some writers consider Poulenc one of the first openly gay composers. His first serious relationship was with painter Richard Chanlaire, to whom he dedicated his *Concert champêtre* saying "you have changed my life, you are the sunshine of my thirty years, a reason for living and working."³³ However, Poulenc's life was also one of inner struggle. Having been born and raised a Roman Catholic, he struggled throughout his life between coming to terms with his unorthodox sexual tendencies and maintaining his religious convictions.³⁴ Other correspondence with Chanlaire states, "you know that I am as sincere in my faith, without any messianic screamings, as I am in my Parisian sexuality."³⁵

He was also a very close friend of the singer Pierre Bernac, for whom he wrote many songs; some sources have hinted that this long friendship had intimate undertones.³⁶ The now-

³⁰ Ibid., 17.

³¹ Francis Poulenc, and Stéphane Audel. *My Friends and Myself: Conversations [with] Francis Poulenc*. London: Dobson, 1978. 49.

³² Wilfrid Mellers. *Francis Poulenc*. Oxford studies of composers. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. 14.

³³ Francis Poulenc, and Stéphane Audel. *My Friends and Myself: Conversations [with] Francis Poulenc*. London: Dobson, 1978. 28.

³⁴ Ibid., 30.

³⁵ Ibid., 30.

³⁶ Henri Hell. *Francis Poulenc*. New York: Grove Press, 1959. 39.

published correspondence between the two men, however, strongly suggests that they were never romantically involved.

Despite theories directed towards his homosexuality, it is fact that Poulenc also had a number of relationships with women. He fathered a daughter, Marie-Ange, although he never formally admitted that he was indeed her father.³⁷ Her mother, Freddy is the dedicatee of two of his songs.

Poulenc was profoundly affected by the death of friends. First came the death of Raymonde Linossier, then in 1923 he was "unable to do anything" for two days after his twenty-year-old friend and novelist Raymond Radiguet died from typhoid fever.³⁸ In 1936, Poulenc was profoundly affected by the death of another composer, Pierre-Octave Ferroud, who was killed in an automobile accident in Hungary. This led to his first visit to the shrine of the Black Virgin of Rocamadour. Here, before the statue of the Madonna with a young child on her lap, Poulenc experienced a religious transformation.³⁹ Thereafter his work took on more religious themes, beginning with the *Litanies à la vierge noire* (1936). He began to embrace the Dada movement's techniques, creating melodies that would have challenged what was considered appropriate for Parisian music halls. In 1949, Poulenc experienced the death of another friend, the artist Christian Bérard, for whom he composed his *Stabat Mater* (1950).⁴⁰ Other sacred works from this period include the *Mass in G* (1937), *Gloria* (1959), and *Sept répons des ténèbres* (1962).

³⁷ George Russell Keck. *Francis Poulenc: A Bio-Bibliography*. Bio-bibliographies in music, no. 28. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990. 19.

³⁸ Francis Poulenc, and Stéphane Audel. *My Friends and Myself: Conversations [with] Francis Poulenc*. London: Dobson, 1978. 49.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

Toward the end of Poulenc's life, he was particularly fond of woodwinds and planned to compose a sonata for each instrument in the family, yet only lived to complete four: sonatas for flute, oboe, clarinet, and the *Elégie* for horn.⁴¹ Among these sonatas, one of the most popular is the *Sonata for Clarinet*, completed shortly before his death in 1962. The piece was premiered at Carnegie Hall in 1963 by Benny Goodman and Leonard Bernstein three months after Poulenc died.⁴²

Poulenc's death on January 30th, 1966 was attributed to heart failure, and he was buried at the cemetery of Pere-Lachaise in Paris. Poulenc is remembered most distinctly for his talent for composition and his simple yet elegant style. Composing in several different genres, Poulenc wrote with a consistent attention to melodic development and simple phrase structures. For this and other reasons, many of his compositions are among the most familiar to generations of musicians that have had the pleasure of performing his music.

⁴¹ Henri Hell. *Francis Poulenc*. New York: Grove Press, 1959. 298.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 299.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Brass Ensemble Music prior to the Twentieth Century

A small number of compositions were published for brass ensembles during the first two decades of the twentieth century, with most of these works being transcriptions and arrangements. A rapid growth in literature began in the 1920s with a significant repertoire established by the middle of the century. Today, there is a large repertoire available for brass groups of various sizes and abilities, from training material for young performers to concert literature for performance by professional musicians.

The period from the death of J.S. Bach to the death of Beethoven was probably the most unproductive era for brass ensemble literature.⁴³ Johann Ernst Altenburg's *Concerto for Seven Clarini and Timpani*, Mozart's *Twelve Duos* (K.487) for two wind instruments, Beethoven's *Three Equali for Four Trombones*, and C.P.E. Bach's *March for Three Trumpets and Timpani* are all interesting pieces and they occupy a prominent position as rare works written for brass ensembles.⁴⁴ Other notable composers to have written for brass before the 18th century include Johann Pezel, Andreas Hammerschmidt and Romanus Weichlein. Also worthy of mention among the rare pieces written for brass ensembles is the Moravian church music tradition of the mid-eighteenth century, which has been retained today in various forms such as trumpet duets and trombone quartets.

The composers of the Romantic period did little more than their immediate predecessors in providing important contributions to brass ensemble literature. There were however improvements to the instruments themselves, most notably the invention of the valve around 1815. Due to this growth in instrument technology, there was a renewal of interest in brass

⁴³ Arthur G. Swift. "Twentieth-Century Brass Ensemble Music A Survey with Analyses of Representative Compositions". Thesis (Ph.D.)--University of Iowa. 1970. 209.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 209.

ensembles in the nineteenth century. For example, the evangelical trombone choir or *Posaunenchor*, was developed to meet certain needs which grew out of the religious revival movement.⁴⁵ A brass choir was organized in Jollenbeck, Germany in 1843 consisting of keyed bugles and trombones, with flugelhorn and tenorhorns added soon afterwards. In 1870 Eduard Kuhlo established a *Gymnasialposaunenchor*, (public school trombone choir) in Gutersloh, Germany which began to solidify both instrumentation and repertoire.⁴⁶

Several well-known brass groups appeared around the middle of the nineteenth century. Henry Distin and the Frye family were popular for a time in England because of their small brass ensemble performances.⁴⁷ In Germany, Johannes Kuhlo and Julius Kosleck were also leaders of important brass groups. Like the evangelical brass ensembles of the early nineteenth century these groups were not responsible for any major additions to the repertoire. However these ensembles helped to create a greater interest in brass instruments as well as the newly invented saxhorns.⁴⁸ With the added efforts of orchestral composers such as Richard Wagner, Hector Berlioz and Richard Strauss a foundation was laid for the renaissance in brass music which was to take place in the twentieth century.

A wide variety of instrumentations may be observed in the brass ensemble music of the Romantic Period. As was previously mentioned, ensembles involving keyed bugles, slide trumpets, trombones, natural or military trumpets, flugelhorn, tenorhorns, etc. were the main source of instruments to be combined.⁴⁹ The invention of the valve and the subsequent appearance of the saxhorn instruments provided even more opportunity for experimentation.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 211.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 211.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 212.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 212.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 213.

These experiments were especially prevalent in England where the British brass band movement was beginning to take hold.⁵⁰

Early Twentieth Century Brass Music

Style and instrumentation of late nineteenth century compositions for brass ensemble influenced the first two decades of the twentieth century. The five mixed quartets of Wilhelm Ramsoe and Alexander Glazounov's quartet, *In modo religioso* are twentieth century examples of this nineteenth century style and instrumentation.⁵¹ Variations in style and instrumentation occurred but extensive experimentation and preferences for other combinations of instruments did not begin until the mid 1920's. Researchers of brass ensemble literature have found little material from the first three decades of the twentieth century.⁵² While assertions about the lack of brass music are not completely unjustified, it can be firmly established that over a dozen well known composers wrote for brass during these decades, including Sigrid Karg-Elert, Oskar Bohem and Victor Ewald.⁵³

In terms of style and form the brass ensemble music of the early twentieth century was not essentially different from that of the late nineteenth century. In fact, a great majority of the early twentieth century compositions are in a Romantic style quite similar to the transcriptions and arrangements produced for brass ensembles during the late nineteenth century. These works may be characterized by triadic and traditional harmonic style, simple rhythmic patterns, a lack of independence in inner parts and the use of primarily common meter.⁵⁴ The melodic style of these works is dominated by cantabile lines in contrary motion. These early works are often one

⁵⁰ Ibid., 213.

⁵¹ Ibid., 215.

⁵² Benjimamin F. Husted. "The Brass Ensemble: Its History and Music." Doctoral Dissertation, University of Rochester. 1955. 274.

⁵³ Thomas Holstadt. "Modern Concepts in Music for Brass." Doctoral Dissertation. University of Rochester. 1962 Fullerton, Calif. : F. E. Olds & Sons. 1967. 3.

⁵⁴ Arthur G. Swift. "Twentieth-Century Brass Ensemble Music A Survey with Analyses of Representative Compositions". Thesis (Ph.D.)--University of Iowa. 1970. 214.

movement pieces which exhibit homophonic textures more than any other.⁵⁵ The following section discusses compositions that demonstrate some of these consistencies in compositional style.

Survey of Representative Compositions

Sigfrid Karg-Elert, a German music theorist and composer, wrote *Chaconne and Fugue with Chorale: 35 Variations on a Basso Ostinato, op. 73* for two trumpets, two trombones, two tubas, timpani, percussion and organ. Published in 1910, this is one of the few contrapuntal pieces written for brass ensemble in this period.⁵⁶

Oskar Bohme's *Sextet in Eb Minor, op. 30*, written in 1911, is a well known work in four movements. Bohme's sextet is an excellent vehicle for displaying the technical capabilities of the brass instruments of the era. The piece continues to be performed by various professional groups and is among the most respected by scholars of early twentieth century brass music. Mary Rasmussen describes the work as "Oskar Bohme's grand old, romantic old, slushy old Sextet" and includes it in her list of representative pieces of the period.⁵⁷

Another outstanding work, published about a year after the Bohme sextet, is Russian composer Victor Ewald's *Quintett b moll, op. 5*. Its appearance early in the twentieth century, a time when the literature for modern brass instruments was still in a formative stage, increases its historical significance.⁵⁸ The work is in three movements, in contrast to most pieces for brass composed at this time. The individual parts are independent as the inner and lower parts are often responsible for presenting the leading line. While seemingly simple when compared to

⁵⁵ Ibid., 214.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 319.

⁵⁷ Mary Rasmussen. "A Teacher's Guide to the Literature of Brass Instruments". Durham, N.H.: *Brass Quarterly*, 1964. 36.

⁵⁸ Benjamin Ivry. *Francis Poulenc*. 20th-century composers. London: Phaidon, 1996. 149.

Boehm's work, this may have been Ewald's method of setting his work apart from the pieces that were popular at the time.⁵⁹

Perspectives on Poulenc's *Sonata*

Poulenc's *Sonata for Horn, Trumpet and Trombone* is both a reactionary and revolutionary piece in the brass repertoire. It includes several of the characteristics previously mentioned such as triadic and traditional harmonic style and simple rhythmic patterns. The use of a basic tonal harmonic style and the combination of both tertian and quartal textures makes the *Sonata* representative of French music for brass ensemble written in the early twentieth century.⁶⁰

Poulenc was one of the first to employ the dissonances often associated with the "added-note" technique. This technique is based upon the implementation of a single non-harmonically related tone in either a melody or harmony with the intention of creating an unavoidable dissonance.⁶¹ Given the fact that the *Sonata* was written so early in Poulenc's career, one could speculate that this technique was the result of a young, brash, experimental composer. Poulenc's association with the Dada movement and its outspoken criticism of World War I could also have influenced his use of dissonance. In any case it is difficult to dispute the idea that these implementations of dissonance were not profoundly intentional.

In addition to the melodic and harmonic tension created by the "added-note" technique, Poulenc also included rhythms that are often affected by changing-meter or fanfare styles.⁶² Dynamic contrasts are also quite wide and ranges for the instruments are frequently extreme. All

⁵⁹ Ibid., 150.

⁶⁰ Jean Michel Nectoux. *The New Grove Twentieth-Century French Masters: Fauré, Debussy, Satie, Ravel, Poulenc, Messiaen, Boulez*. New York: Norton, 1986. 170.

⁶¹ Ibid., 198.

⁶² Arthur G. Swift. "Twentieth-Century Brass Ensemble Music A Survey with Analyses of Representative Compositions". Thesis (Ph.D.)--University of Iowa. 1970. 218.

these elements can be seen as influential factors in the composition of several pieces for brass ensemble by French composers at this point in the period. Paul Dukas' *Fanfare pour precéder "La Peri"* in 1927 utilizes both the wide range and drastically contrasting dynamics found in Poulenc's *Sonata*.⁶³ The basic fanfare style in brief sections of the first movement of the *Sonata* are an obvious influence on Dukas' piece as well as Desire Inghelbrecht's *Four Fanfares* (1929), Eugene Bozza's *Fanfare heroique, op 46* (1944), Paul Bonneau's *Fanfare* (1951), Henri Tomasi's *Fanfares liturgiques* (1952) as well as many others throughout the middle of the century.⁶⁴ Contemporary composers beyond those already mentioned whom Poulenc influenced would include: Albert Roussel, Charles-Marie Widor, Jacques Charpentier, Pierre Dubois, Pierre Gabaye, Marcel Dupre, Gaston G. Litaize, Daniel Lesur, Albert Manouvrier, Amable Massis, Marcel Mihalovici, Albert Perilhou, Piere Petit, Jeanine Rueff and Lous Vierne.⁶⁵ Other examples of pieces written in the middle of the twentieth century that contain evidence of Poulenc's contemporary influence through the use of quartal textures include Hindemith's *Morgenmusik* (1932) and Riegger's *Music for Brass Choir* (1949).⁶⁶

Perhaps the most important effect that Poulenc's *Sonata* had on brass ensemble music was its challenge or resistance to the traditions of Romantic style found in brass ensemble literature. Most prevalent is Poulenc's experimentation with instrumentation which rebelled against the quartet based brass ensembles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁶⁷ Though it did not establish the brass trio as a new standard, it did prompt composers throughout Europe and North America to begin experimenting with new forms of the brass ensemble.⁶⁸ The

⁶³ Ibid., 219.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 220.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 221.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 224.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 228.

⁶⁸ Richard G. Decker. *A Bibliography of Music for Three Heterogeneous Brass Instruments Alone and in Chamber Ensembles*. Oneonta, N.Y.: Swift-Dorr Publications, 1976. 47.

brass sextet became popular in the 1930's, the brass choir was revived in the 1950's and perhaps the most significant development, the brass quintet of the 1960's having been sustained as the most dominant brass ensemble up to the present day.⁶⁹ In contrast to the current popularity of the brass quintet, noteworthy because of its widespread use by professional brass chamber groups, the brass quartet experienced a significant decline in popularity, particularly in North America.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 47.

ANALYSIS

General Observations

Structural design and tonal relationships of the *Sonata* existing within and between the individual movements are clearly defined. Internal sections of each of the movements tend to be defined as well, providing several examples of this strong sectionalism as well as the occasional exception where section divisions are more vague. Tendencies noted in phrase structure and periodicity are also detectible.

The three movements, titled *Allegro moderato*, *Andante*, and *Rondeau*, are used to exploit Poulenc's flair for lyrical and witty melodic material. Keith Daniel refers to the atmosphere created by the *Sonata* as similar to a Parisian street celebration as well as the musical humor inherent in his use of circus themes in the *Rondeau* movement.⁷⁰ Poulenc's early style often emphasizes the repetition of these lyrical melodies, making them easy to retain. This unifying characteristic of repetition and cyclical themes used in this and many other works by Poulenc is also evident when material from the first and/or second movements returns in the third.⁷¹

Many of Poulenc's works are titled „*Sonata*’ while they do not stress sonata form nor the use of extended developmental sections.⁷² Having identified this, it is important to note the amount of thematic development or repetition that is imbedded into the basic fabric of each section, which often immediately follows the initial presentation of thematic material. Because of the sectional nature of the *Sonata* and the absence of transitions of significant length, harmonic motion, especially at the phrase level is of extreme importance.⁷³

⁷⁰ Keith W. Daniel. *Francis Poulenc, His Artistic Development and Musical Style*. Studies in musicology, no. 52. Ann Arbor, Mich: UMI Research Press, 1982. 280.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 280.

⁷² Sidney Buckland, and Myriam Chimènes. *Francis Poulenc: Music, Art, and Literature*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999. 129.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 131.

A prominent feature to Poulenc's harmonic style is his use of dissonance which has an important function within his generally consonant melodic and harmonic language. As previously mentioned, Poulenc uses what is known as the "added-note" dissonance in the *Sonata*, and other pieces from this early stage of his career. This technique is characteristic of devices used by members of *Les Six* during the neoclassic movement in France.⁷⁴ It involves the substitution or addition of "out of tune" or "wrong" notes in an otherwise conventional harmonic scheme. Poulenc employs this device to create shocking, humorous, or impertinent effects. Grove's dictionary describes this technique through the following:

...in the Sonata for horn, trumpet and trombone (1922) the opening theme is one of Poulenc's 'folk songs' clearly a relation in many in *Les Biches*, which needs the correction of only three „wrong' notes in the first four bars for it to conform with eighteenth-century harmonic practice--as it were, Pergolesi with his wig awry.⁷⁵

Poulenc was composing *Les Biches*, a one act ballet, at virtually the same time as his composition of the *Sonata*--the ballet also contains several folk melodies and dances.⁷⁶

The score for the *Sonata* is interesting as it hints at Poulenc's desire to separate his compositions from the traditions of the orchestra in the nineteenth century. Poulenc intended for his *Sonata* to be an example of how a piece with a thinner instrumentation and texture can have as musical an impactful as a work with larger proportions. The *Sonata* is scored in the standard orchestral style with the horn placed on the top staff above the trumpet and trombone. When considering the roles of each instrument, as well as the range of the respective instruments, one would easily understand the choice to place the trumpet on the top staff. However, Poulenc's use

⁷⁴ Ibid., 159.

⁷⁵ Jean Michel Nectoux. *The New Grove Twentieth-Century French Masters: Fauré, Debussy, Satie, Ravel, Poulenc, Messiaen, Boulez*. New York: Norton, 1986. 172.

⁷⁶ Henri Hell. *Francis Poulenc*. New York: Grove Press, 1959. 112.

of orchestral score order proves that he was composing in an orchestral context while establishing the chamber brass ensemble as an equally effective musical vehicle.

Movement I

The first movement, marked *Allegro Moderato*, alternates thematic material, tempo and tonal center. These elements, along with the use of silence, contribute to a strong sense of sectionalism.⁷⁷ The first movement differs greatly from the second and third as distinctions between sections in these movements are less substantial. Changes in tonal center are generally the only features that distinguish one section from another in the latter two movements.⁷⁸

The first movement can be divided into two large sections each containing two sub-sections, A, B followed by C, A'. The following figure shows the delineation between the main sections, and are indicated with their style marking and tempo:

Example 1: Allegro Moderato Form

A	B	C	A'
<i>Grazioso</i>	<i>Plus Lent</i>	<i>Subitement vite, sans presser</i>	<i>Tempo I</i>
Quarter = 120	Quarter = 104	Quarter = 144	Quarter = 120
mm. 1-25	mm. 26-40	mm. 41-59	mm. 60-96

Proportionally, the A and B sections make up less than half of the movement while the C and A' sections represent slightly more than half.⁷⁹ In terms of phrase structure, the *Sonata* is largely based on four measure phrases and rarely deviates from this idea, which is representative

⁷⁷ Gary C. Mortenson. 1986. "Historical Perspectives and Analytical Observations on Francis Poulenc's *Sonata* (1922)". *International Trumpet Guild*. Vol. 10, No. 3: 10-13. 12.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 161.

of the many songs for solo voice composed by Poulenc⁸⁰. This predictability of phrasing is occasionally interrupted by syncopation and mixed meters, as seen mm. 9 - 15 (Example 2).⁸¹

Example 2: Allegro Moderato Mm. 9 - 15

Keith Daniel provides insight into the form of the *Sonata* by briefly discussing the unusual ABCA' structure of the first movement. Daniel's description of Poulenc's phrase structure describes Poulenc's general style rather than the specific form of the work. According to Daniel, Poulenc's developmental sections are virtually non-existent due to the fact that he develops his musical ideas throughout the entire composition.⁸² In this way the composer's style throughout the *Sonata* can be seen as additive rather than developmental. Due to this additive

⁸⁰ Pierre Bernac. *Francis Poulenc, the Man and His Songs*. New York: Norton, 1977. 88.

⁸¹ Gary C. Mortenson. 1986. "Historical Perspectives and Analytical Observations on Francis Poulenc's *Sonata* (1922)". *International Trumpet Guild*. Vol. 10, No. 3: 10-13. 11.

⁸² Keith W. Daniel, *Francis Poulenc, His Artistic Development and Musical Style*. *Studies in musicology*, no. 52. Ann Arbor, Mich: UMI Research Press, 1982. 286.

approach, the piece is highly sectionalized and sharply contrasted with repetition of themes based on internal logic rather than an external pattern such as sonata form.⁸³

Poulenc's use of repetition is also exemplified through his cadential figures which correlate to form structure in general. The cadences found in mm. 18 - 22 and mm. 82 - 86 in the first movement are used again in the third movement in mm 23 - 26.⁸⁴ This cyclical structure of harmonic motion is a technique often employed in Poulenc's songs and other chamber works.⁸⁵

The *Sonata* as a whole is tonally stable, with each section sustaining one key area and each movement concluding in its original key. However, there are occasional shifts between major and minor tonal centers which results in what I would refer to as a tonal cross relation. The introduction of the pitch Eb in the A section of the first movement foreshadows the tonal center of the B section beginning in m. 26. This Eb is approached through G minor with this relationship maintained throughout the B section. In the B section the new tonic on Eb is never seen in root position. As the tonal center of Bb is approached through the fifth relation, the Eb harmony often includes a raised fourth scale degree, or in this case, an A natural. The return of G major is approached in the same manner, though it is preceded by the flat-six (Eb). Observed on a larger perspective, the keys outline a first inversion Eb major triad, G-Bb-Eb.⁸⁶

Another example of the tonal stability of the *Sonata* is Poulenc's use of triadic melodies and arpeggiated patterns.⁸⁷ Gary Mortenson suggests that Poulenc's use of arpeggios and triadic motives act to unify whole sections of the *Sonata*.⁸⁸ He asserts that the arpeggio becomes the

⁸³ Ibid., 287.

⁸⁴ Gary C. Mortenson. 1986. "Historical Perspectives and Analytical Observations on Francis Poulenc's *Sonata* (1922)". *International Trumpet Guild*. Vol. 10, No. 3: 10-13. 11.

⁸⁵ Pierre Bernac. Francis Poulenc, the Man and His Songs. New York: Norton, 1977. 103.

⁸⁶ Gary C. Mortenson. 1986. "Historical Perspectives and Analytical Observations on Francis Poulenc's *Sonata* (1922)". *International Trumpet Guild*. Vol. 10, No. 3: 10-13. 13.

⁸⁷ Gary C. Mortenson, 1986. "Historical Perspectives and Analytical Observations on Francis Poulenc's *Sonata* (1922)". *International Trumpet Guild*. Vol. 10, No. 3: 10-13

⁸⁸ Ibid., 12.

primary melodic vehicle for expansion, elaboration, and repetition in roles that are thematic, transitional, accompaniment based, rhythmic, and lyrical.⁸⁹

Example 3 demonstrates Poulenc's incorporation of arpeggiated patterns. The outline of a G major triad in the trumpet part is a simple yet effective way of presenting the primary theme of the movement.

Example 3: Allegro Moderato Mm. 1- 2⁹⁰

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The top staff is in treble clef, the middle in treble clef, and the bottom in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is 'Grazioso' with a quarter note equal to approximately 120 beats per minute. The music features arpeggiated patterns in the trumpet part, with dynamics ranging from piano (p) to mezzo-forte (mf) and fortissimo (pp). The first measure is marked '1. p' and the second measure is marked '2. mf'. The score includes a first ending bracket and a second ending bracket, with the instruction 'très précis' above the second ending. The bass line is marked 'pp'.

Poulenc's preference for triadic and arpeggiated patterns as sources for his motivic development is often combined with his use of repetition and variation. The main theme found in the trumpet part in Example 3 employs a G major triad which is repeated three more times in the movement. Poulenc varies rhythm and articulation to present the theme as seen in mm. 5 and 6 (Example 4) which contain the second appearance of the theme.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Ibid., 12.

⁹⁰ Gary C. Mortenson, 1986. "Historical Perspectives and Analytical Observations on Francis Poulenc's *Sonata* (1922)". *International Trumpet Guild*. Vol. 10, No. 3: 10-13

⁹¹ Ibid., 12.

Example 4: Allegro Moderato Mm. 5 - 6⁹²

One of the major harmonic characteristics of the first movement is the alternation between major and minor modes. Example 5 shows the alternation between G major and minor modes through the application of purely triadic melodic figures in all three instrument parts. These triads also serve as a transition to the contrasting lyrical melodies of the B section.⁹³

Example 5: Allegro Moderato Mm. 22 - 25⁹⁴

Example 6 shows one of the few moments in the *Sonata* where the horn takes over as the lead melodic voice. Again, we find the use of a simple triadic figure throughout this section.

⁹² Ibid., 12.

⁹³ Ibid., 12.

⁹⁴ Gary C. Mortenson, 1986. "Historical Perspectives and Analytical Observations on Francis Poulenc's *Sonata* (1922)". *International Trumpet Guild*. Vol. 10, No. 3: 10-13. 12.

Example 6: Allegro Moderato Mm. 40-41⁹⁵



Though the movement is tonally stable there are sections where Poulenc implements the “added-note” technique. One example can be found in m. 87 as the movement comes to a close (Example 7). At the end of this measure the trumpet and trombone sound the interval of a minor second. This is an example of a harmonic adaptation of the “added-note”, however there are also

Example 7: Allegro Moderato M. 87



examples of this technique on the melodic level, primarily in the first and third movements. As seen in Example 7, Poulenc is not afraid to leave the stark dissonance unaccompanied by a third voice, leaving the exposed harshness of the minor second to have significant impact on the listener.

Movement II

The second movement provides a stark contrast to the disjunct style which pervades the first movement.⁹⁶ The standard ternary form employs melodic material found predominantly in

⁹⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 12.

the trumpet part with a brief section allowing the horn to provide a short interjection.⁹⁷ Marked as *tres lent* (very slow) at ♩ = equals 76, tempo is consistent throughout the entire movement.

Example 9 shows the general form of the movement including phrase structure and length.

Example 8: Andante Form

A			B	A	
a	a'	a''	b	a	a'
<i>Tres lent</i>			(transition)		
♩ = 76					
mm. 1-4	mm. 5-9	mm. 10-15	mm. 15-18	mm. 19-23	mm. 24-33

The melody throughout this movement is loosely based on the lyric theme presented in the B section of the first movement.⁹⁸ At m. 15 the melody in the horn part is the same as in the B section in movement one (Example 8). This recall of material serves to tie together the musical texture of the *Sonata* as a whole, another example of Poulenc's use of repetition in his chamber works.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Ibid., 12.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 12.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 13.

Example 9: Andante Mm. 15-16 & Allegro Moderato Mm. 26-27

Andante Mm. 15-16



Allegro Moderato Mm. 26-27 (B Section)



The key signature, or indication of the tonic key is misleading and unorthodox for Poulenc's compositions. The key signature would imply Bb major or G minor, however, the tonal center for the first eight measures is clearly Bb minor. In fact, most of the movement exists in Bb minor with brief areas of G minor, F minor and the piece ends in Bb major but only in the very last measure.

The major-minor alternation found in the transition between the A and B sections of the first movement (mm. 22-25) becomes an essential feature of movement two.¹⁰⁰ In measure 13 the Gb is approached by half step from above via a flat-six to five bass motion. This harmonic motion is another example of repetition, as this bass motion was employed in the first movement. In the second movement however, this bass motion suggests a possible enharmonic modulation to the key of Bb major. However, instead of doing so, the harmonic motion moves to the key of G minor.¹⁰¹

The B section of the second movement is distinguished by three ascending stepwise lines. The first begins on F# and reaches a peak note of C, the second begins on F and ends on Db and

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 12.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 12.

the third begins on F and is ultimately resolved on Bb.¹⁰² The conclusion of the third line acts as a return to the key of Bb. At the return of the A section in m. 20, we again see the flat-six to five resolution (Example 10).¹⁰³

Example 10: Andante M. 20



This harmonic motion brings the movement to a close and also provides symmetry in the harmonic motion as this motion is found earlier in the movement. It is interesting to note that the keys employed in this movement outline the lower third of a G minor triad.¹⁰⁴

Movement III

The third movement is perhaps more dependent on recurring motives than either of the first two. The theme of the third movement (Example 11) returns six different times, four of which are in the tonic key of D major.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Keith W. Daniel, *Francis Poulenc, His Artistic Development and Musical Style*. Studies in musicology, no. 52. Ann Arbor, Mich: UMI Research Press, 1982. 286.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 287.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 287.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 13.

Example 11: Rondeau Mm. 1-2



An interesting characteristic of the third movement is the deduction of form. One could make the argument that the form is not a rondo but rather in ternary form, as it employs three main sections with the original A section returning to close the piece.¹⁰⁶ I believe that Poulenc made the decision to label this movement as a rondeau in an effort to reflect the style of the Renaissance vocal rondeaux. Poulenc continued throughout his career to blur the distinction of form versus style in many of his works for both chamber ensemble as well as his pieces for solo voice and accompaniment.¹⁰⁷ Example 12 shows the basic structural outline of the movement and the transitional areas between the major sections.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 13.

¹⁰⁷ Vivian Lee Poates Wood. *Poulenc's Songs: An Analysis of Style*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1979. 196.

Example 12: Rondeau Form.

A			B			A'		
a	b	a'		a'	a''	a	b	a'''
<i>Anime</i>			(transition)		(transition)			
Qtr = 144								
mm. 1-6	mm. 7-15	mm. 15-23	mm. 24-27	mm. 28-32	mm. 33-37	mm. 38-44	mm. 45-53	mm. 54-59

Again we see the principal feature of the alternation between major and minor tonalities that appeared in the first movement and became increasingly important in the second.¹⁰⁸

However this alternation is present in the third movement as a dominant element in the melodic material. The alternation to D minor found in the theme in mm. 39 and 43 provide a brief shift in tonality before the return of the A section which closes the movement.

The melodies employed here are examples of Poulenc's relentless sense of humor and his desire to use folk styles. The theme of the third movement, which is repeated several times, is taken from the circus themes of the late Renaissance period. It could also be interpreted as a reference to the street parade music of early 18th century France. This dry and rather raucous style is found in some of Poulenc's other works such as the first movement of his *Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon*.¹⁰⁹

The internal relationships between the three movements play an interesting role in the unification and fluidity of the *Sonata*.¹¹⁰ The overall tonal scheme of the piece is I - (bVI - III) - IV - V with a tonal center of G major. G major is found in each movement and provides support

¹⁰⁸ Gary C. Mortenson, 1986. "Historical Perspectives and Analytical Observations on Francis Poulenc's *Sonata* (1922)". *International Trumpet Guild*. Vol. 10, No. 3: 10-13. 13.

¹⁰⁹ Keith W. Daniel, *Francis Poulenc, His Artistic Development and Musical Style*. Studies in musicology, no. 52. Ann Arbor, Mich: UMI Research Press, 1982. 290.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 291.

in first movement as an integral part of harmonic progression and appears centrally in the latter two movements. The tonic key of the second movement (Bb minor) is anticipated in the B section of the first movement. The adaptation of G major at the conclusion of the first movement and Bb major at the conclusion of the second contributes to a smooth connection between the movements. In each case, the final chord of the preceding movement has two common tones with the key of the following movement.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Ibid., 290.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PERFORMANCE

General Recommendations

The *Sonata* is a work of singular importance in the development of modern brass chamber music, requiring considerable musical understanding and highly developed performance skills on the part of the players. An understanding of French style is assumed for an accurate performance, but Poulenc's extreme approach to issues of tempo, counterpoint, balance, intonation, and expression must also be addressed.

In addition to a basic understanding of French style, the performers must also understand Poulenc's intentions. His approach to using "added-notes" and dissonances, as has been discussed, is an essential feature in this and other compositions of his early period. When performing these dissonances, no apologies can be made in their presentation as they must be played with conviction and strength so that listeners will be acutely aware of the exact effects Poulenc desired.¹¹²

The three movements complement each other in several ways, bringing together the best qualities of Poulenc's dry, witty style and the lyricism which is integral in his vocal works.¹¹³ Poulenc seems to alternate between joyful, tongue-in-cheek moods and serious moments full of reflection in time frames often only seconds apart. However, the overriding mood of the *Sonata* has to be in the realm of fun and folly. Poulenc is meticulous in every detail in his indications to the performers. In order for his wit and unique brand of humor to be fully appreciated, these indications must be followed faithfully.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Gary C. Mortenson, 1986. "Historical Perspectives and Analytical Observations on Francis Poulenc's *Sonata* (1922)". *International Trumpet Guild*. Vol. 10, No. 3: 10-13. 13.

¹¹³ Vivian Lee Poates Wood. *Poulenc's Songs: An Analysis of Style*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1979. 196.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

From a brass player's standpoint, the *Sonata* must be viewed as a demanding work requiring control and endurance as each of the three movements unfolds with virtually no rest for the performers.¹¹⁵ Care must be taken in programming this work in the context of a lengthy recital as the length of the first movement and slow tempi of the second tax the embouchure substantially.

The majority of the melodic lines exist in the trumpet part, establishing the instrument as the solo force with the horn and trombone often serving as accompaniment. The trumpet has been established as the main vehicle for thematic motives and provides perhaps the most challenge for an accurate realization of Poulenc's style. The trombone is often relegated to outlining chordal structures, thus establishing the harmonic progression. The horn part combines both duties, occasionally performing primary melodic material but in most cases providing harmonic support.

Movement I

In the first movement of the *Sonata*, Poulenc changes meter, tempo, and character with what may seem to be a reckless abandon.¹¹⁶ Within the short duration of the movement there are seventeen meter changes, ten tempo changes and numerous shifts in articulation.¹¹⁷ All of this diversity must be accomplished effortlessly by the performers. Sudden changes in dynamics reflect Poulenc's tendency towards abrupt contrast and in order to anticipate these elements the performers must be familiar with the score.

¹¹⁵ Gary C. Mortenson, 1986. "Historical Perspectives and Analytical Observations on Francis Poulenc's *Sonata* (1922)". *International Trumpet Guild*. Vol. 10, No. 3: 10-13. 13.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

Tempo and articulation changes in the first movement range from subtle to drastic, thus one of the most challenging aspects to this work is the accurate performance of these unpredictable alternations of both tempo and articulation.¹¹⁸ Closer examination of how the three parts coincide shows that Poulenc is very specific when it comes to these alternations. The first 25 measures of the movement exemplify this constant alternation of articulation. In mm. 8, 9 (Example 13), 13, 16 and 19 of the horn part, multiple articulations are indicated even within a single beat in some cases. This is also true in mm. 9 (Example 13), 10, and 14 of the trumpet part and mm. 16 and 17 (Example 14) of the trombone part.

Example 13: Allegro Moderato Mm. 9, Horn and Trumpet



Example 14: Allegro Moderato Mm 17, Trombone



The subtle tempo change at m. 9 is again complicated by another example of multiple articulations for a single instrument in a single measure. In m. 9 the trumpet is required to play staccato on the first and last two eighth notes, and he has marked tenuto and a slur over the interior eighths. This technique of applying a tenuto marking on a note that is also slurred is a stylistic indication that weight should be put on these particular notes.¹¹⁹ This is evident in the

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 11.

¹¹⁹ Bernard Kelly. 2002. "Francis Poulenc: Music, Art and Literature". *Music and Letters*. 83, no. 4: 651-653. 653.

fact that the tenuto marking is always placed on the first of any group of notes where we find this notation. Examples of this occur in mm. 9 - 16 where in some cases, these weighted notes also contain an ornament as well (Example 15).

Example 15: Allegro Moderato Mm. 10 and 11, Horn and Trumpet



Groups of slurred notes are not the only places where Poulenc has chosen to apply tenuto markings, as is seen in m. 17 (Example 16) where a tenuto is placed on the fourth, sixth and seventh eighth notes in this measure. This articulation seems arbitrary at first glance, but when the trumpet part is compared with the horn part it is clear that this was intentional as both instruments have the exact same rhythm and articulations (Example 16).



Example 16: Allegro Moderato M. 17, Horn and Trumpet



On a larger scale it is interesting to note what might be considered an inconsistency in the delivery of important themes throughout the first and third movements. Poulenc chooses to use a variety of dynamics and articulations when the main themes re-enter. This is not an arbitrary adaptation of musical elements but a finely crafted musical pursuit. I believe that Poulenc is seeking to achieve a “textural shift” in the music at these various points. He uses an alternating

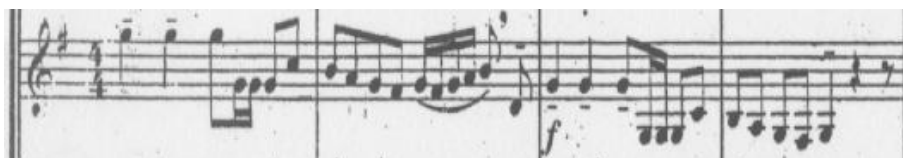
pattern of articulations throughout the piece to develop an internal theme and variations structure. This alternating pattern of articulations is developed by applying a certain articulation to a part for a particular theme. An alternate articulation is applied to the next entrance of the theme, with a combination of the two articulations used for the third appearance of the theme. The pattern is fairly consistent in all three parts, primarily in the first and third movements. One example of this pattern is found in the first movement occurring between mm. 18, 20, 82 and 84 where the *très gai* (very happy) motive that concludes the first A section in the first movement reappears at the conclusion of the piece (second A section). In m. 18 the figure uses tenuto articulations on the first two quarter notes which are followed by staccato markings over the remaining eighth notes. Two measures later in m. 20 the motive is displaced by an octave and uses only staccato markings (Example 17). In m. 82 the theme returns and provides a new set of articulations as the quarter notes are again marked tenuto but the remainder of the theme is not indicated with any articulation at all except for the slur over the last 4 sixteenth notes (Example 17).

Example 17: Allegro Moderato M. 18, Trumpet

m. 18  m. 20 

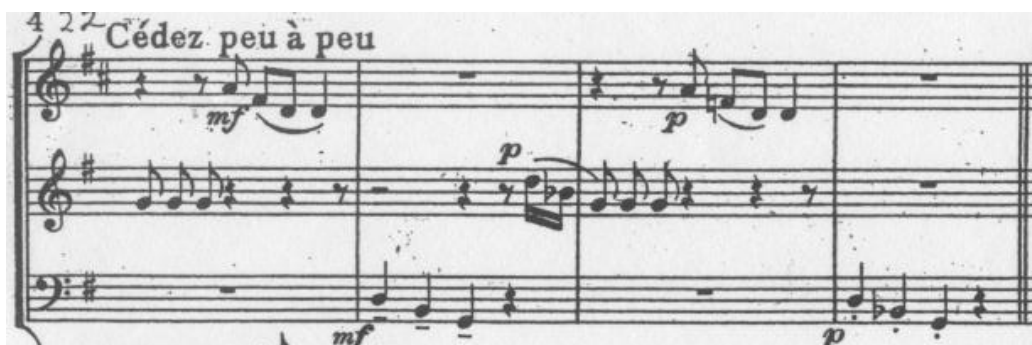
The same treatment is used for the following two measures which deviate considerably from the previous entrance as the octave displaced motive was marked as staccato (m. 20) and in this case it is marked tenuto (m. 84, Example 18).

Example 18: Allegro Moderato Mm. 82 - 85, Trumpet



At m. 22 the dramatic *Cédez peu à peu* (slow down and become softer little by little) marking is used for the first time in the piece which is developed by each individual part through four measures (mm. 22 - 25). All three parts enter alone, making an even change in tempo all the more challenging. Again we see a clever application of articulation as well as a harmonic shift in the trombone part as it first delivers its G major triad in m. 23 with tenuto articulations, then closes the A section in m. 25 with a G minor triad, performed with a staccato articulation (Example 19).

Example 19: Allegro Moderato Mm. 22 - 25



Another excellent example of contrast appears during the B section (mm. 26-39) which begins lyrically and slow at soft dynamic levels.¹²⁰ As the section develops it blossoms to a dramatic climax at m. 36 with two octave leaps in the trumpet (Example 20). In this example Poulenc requires a strong ability to perform compound intervals on the part of the players. All

¹²⁰ Gary C. Mortenson, 1986. "Historical Perspectives and Analytical Observations on Francis Poulenc's *Sonata* (1922)". *International Trumpet Guild*. Vol. 10, No. 3: 10-13. 12.

three parts contain sections where wide intervals must be performed cleanly such as mm. 20, 33, 34, 36 - 39 (Example 20), 46, 87 and 88 in the trumpet part, mm. 17, 30 - 34, 48 (Example 21), 49, 52 - 55 and 71 in the trombone part and mm. 26 - 29, 34 -39 (Example 20), 41, 45, 88 and m. 55 of the third movement (Example 22) in the horn part.

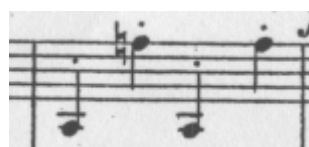
Example 20: Allegro Moderato Mm. 36 - 39



Example 21: Allegro Moderato M. 48, Trombone



Example 22: Rondeau M. 55, Horn



There are strong dynamic shifts throughout the movement as evidenced in the conclusion of the B section in mm. 36 - 39. This section is marked *Pressez peu à peu* (hurrying little by little) and moves from *piano* to *forte* in the trumpet and trombone, and fortissimo in the horn (Example 20). Throughout the *Sonata* Poulenc consistently writes higher dynamic levels for the

horn than for the other two instruments.¹²¹ This shows his obvious concern over balance as the horn does not have the power to project in the same way as the trumpet and trombone. The B section concludes in m. 39 with a falling step-wise pattern marked *ad libitum* in the trumpet.

The C section marked *Subito vite sans preser* (suddenly fast, without hurrying), features yet another sharp contrast in presenting short, precise staccato lines which gradually give way to a legato melody and signals the approach of the A' section beginning at m. 58. It is crucial that the indicated tempo of quarter equals 144 is reached as this will achieve the stark contrast in style and character that is implied. This tempo is also a concern because it must be fast enough to warrant clean multiple tonguing in mm. 54 and 55.

There are what appear to be literal mistakes found in this movement in at least two places. The first two mistakes exist in the trumpet part, the first being in m. 60. There are too many beats represented in the measure for the indicated meter. The common time meter would of course indicate four beats of rhythm required and in this measure we find only three. The multiple presentations of this particular theme previous to this point would suggest that the mistake is simply that sixteenth notes have been used on the first beat where eighth notes should be employed, producing the missing beat (Example 23).

Example 23: Allegro Moderato M. 60, Trumpet



There may be an additional mistake in this measure as the sixteenth notes are not marked with a slur as has been seen in each previous occurrence. This could also be seen as an example

¹²¹ Pamela L. Poulin. "Three Stylistic Traits in Poulenc's Chamber Works for Wind Instruments". Thesis (Ph. D.)--Eastman School of Music, 1983. 160.

Poulenc's development of textural shift. In this case, however, this notation would be an awkward exception to an otherwise formulated pattern seen throughout the movement. The second error in the trumpet part lies in m. 57 which lacks a natural sign over the notated B at the end of the measure. As compared to previous entrances of this theme as well as its association to the other two instrument parts, this is most certainly an error on the part of the copyist or publisher. There is one other possible mistake in this movement which refers to the placement of the slur and fermata in m. 39, most noticeably in the horn part (Example 24). The fermata is not clearly placed and creates confusion as to how the Bb and the C should be performed. The words *long silence* are placed over the measure at this point, yet the two notes are slurred together as if there is to be no break at all. Further, the fermata lies between these two pitches on a dotted line that separates the last pitch from the remainder of the measure, making it difficult to understand exactly how this measure is to be performed. Several recordings of the Sonata suggest that a complete break in sound must be implemented before continuing the piece.¹²² Being that the C in the horn part certainly appears to be a pick-up note, this seems like the logical choice for performance.

Example 24: Allegro Moderato M. 39, Horn



¹²² Thomas Stevens, *Trumpet*. John Cerminaro, French Horn, Thomas Stevens, Trumpet and Ralph Sauer, Trombone. Crystal Records #761, 1996.

Movement II

The second movement provides the greatest challenge in terms of performance practice preparation and endurance. All three parts play continuously throughout this very slow, lyrical yet angular movement, making it difficult to achieve the artistry and beauty while maintaining peak physical performance. Players should strive for flexibility in the tempo especially at the ends of phrases to allow for brief pauses. These pauses will enable the performers to break for a moment and allow the facial muscles to recuperate. These pauses are in line with the style of the movement and thus totally appropriate. Because of the sectionalized nature of the individual phrases, these brief pauses can be interpreted as artistically informed decisions on the part of the players as a means of developing expressiveness.

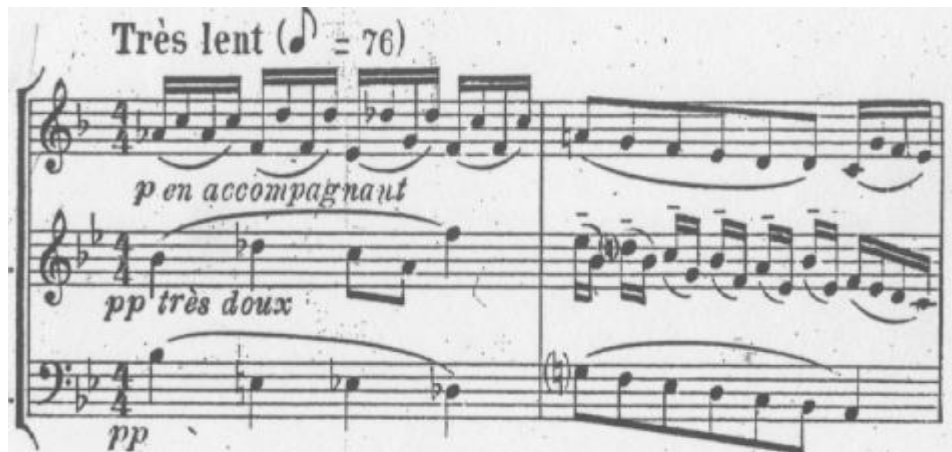
At many points in the second movement Poulenc impresses the listener with his smooth, flowing and lyric approach to melodic expression. The wide intervals that appear in the sixteenth-note accompaniment in the A section of both the trumpet and horn part must be achieved with in the smooth, rolling character of the melody.

Key center and notation for this movement is a bit unorthodox for Poulenc's compositions. The key signature would imply Bb major or G minor, however, the tonal center for the first eight measures is clearly Bb minor. In fact, most of the movement exists in Bb minor with brief areas of G minor, F minor and the piece ends in Bb major, this key area only appears in the last measure. As a result, almost every measure of the movement contains several accidentals.

The second measure of almost every phrase in the movement is based upon pairs of slurred sixteenth notes, the more fluid and active rhythm seen in the second measure can be considered the musical consequent to the antecedent in the previous measure. In addition to this

more active rhythm is the application of the tenuto markings, these markings are applied to only the first of each two-note grouping throughout the movement. As seen in the first movement, Poulenc uses tenuto markings to imply that weight should be placed on the first note of each group of two sixteenths (Example 25). The weight placed on these notes is further supported by the indication of *tres doux* (very gentle, soothing).

Example 25: Andante Mm. 1 - 2



During the B section of the second movement (mm. 13-19), the trombone presents an ostinato rhythmic pattern that brings the trombone to the fore, despite the fact that it is functioning in an accompaniment capacity (Example 26).¹²³ Even though the trombone is subordinate in the *Sonata*, at this moment the accompaniment becomes the driving force, unfolding and articulating the ternary formal structure.¹²⁴

¹²³ Gary C. Mortenson, 1986. "Historical Perspectives and Analytical Observations on Francis Poulenc's *Sonata* (1922)". *International Trumpet Guild*. Vol. 10, No. 3: 10-13. 12.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

Example 26: Andante Mm. 13 - 16, Trombone

The image shows a musical score for Trombone, Example 26, Andante, measures 13-16. The score is in 2/4 time and features a complex rhythmic pattern of sixteenth, eighth, and sixteenth notes. The key signature has two flats. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes a piano (p) dynamic marking. The second system includes a 'Solo' section marked 'en accompagnant' and a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic marking. The trombone part is the central focus, showing a continuous rhythmic pattern with some rests.

Poulenc's skill as an architect is also displayed through this ostinato. He foreshadows the B section (mm.15 to m. 18) by initiating the ostinato in m. 13 that becomes the foundation of the entire B section from mm. 15 - 18. The rhythm of sixteenth-eighth-sixteenth develops the basis for the melody played by the horn throughout the B section. The trombone part contains distinct rhythmic gestures throughout this section, however these rhythms also create a particular performance concern. The phrase structure throughout this section implies that a break may occur every two bars (considering the very slow tempo), however the trombone rhythm makes effective phrasing difficult. One solution is to allow the trombone to play the sixteenth notes full value while the other two instruments lift (Example 26). The trumpet and horn can break momentarily at these points to achieve desired phrase structure. The trombone will find several places to breath throughout this section that will not disrupt phrasing.

There is a mistake in the trumpet part pertaining to articulations found in m. 26. In this measure, the trumpet part is missing a slur over the group of four sixteenth notes. This is an obvious mistake the score containing all three parts does show the slur in the trumpet part, this

particular figure is found two measures earlier in the part and does utilize the slur and the other two parts contain slurs in this measure. If this were a discrepancy in articulations in the first or third movement, the question may be raised as to whether this may be another example of Poulenc developing texture through articulations, but the second movement shows no inconsistencies in articulations whatsoever throughout the movement, making his intentions clear that they should remain consistent through the end of the movement.

An additional mistake in all three parts is found in very last measure of the movement. The placement of the fermata is indeterminate, not indicating either an extended duration of the final note nor a notational indication of an „attacca’ to the third movement. Both the 1945 and 1951 edition of the *Sonata* place the fermata in the area between the last note and the double bar that concludes the movement (Example 27).

Example 27: Andante Mm. 26 and 27



Based upon previous Sonatas for wind instruments, such as the *Sonata for Clarinet* and the *Sonata for Bassoon*, which both include *attaca* markings, Poulenc seems to favor the close attachment between the second and third movements. This would lead a performance ensemble to conclude that the fermata should be over the double bar, as an indication that the third movement should begin quickly after completion of the second movement. This having been

resolved, it does still leave the question of the duration of the final sonority. Based upon recordings of the Sonata the standard seems to be that the last chord should be held momentarily, but not exceedingly.¹²⁵ These recordings also indicate the „attacca’ connection between the two movements.¹²⁶

Movement III

The third movement is perhaps the most indicative of Poulenc’s preference for musical humor and wit. The tempo remains very quick and lively throughout with the style being rhythmic and somewhat raucous.¹²⁷ Poulenc is most descriptive in his indications to the performers in this movement, his remarks range from “nervous” and “discreet” to “very rude” and “very marked”. Within the fast and lively framework of this extremely brief movement the range of articulation markings and various effects created by wide shifts in dynamics and stylistic approach is extraordinary.¹²⁸

The third movement is a source of controversy between those who have studied Poulenc's compositions as well as any who may be insistently meticulous about performance practice. The controversy being referred to lies with in the articulations or rather the inconsistencies in the articulations. As was mentioned during the discussion of the first movement, I believe Poulenc purposely notated and implemented these inconsistencies. There are several places throughout the movement where articulations between the three instruments are opposite, and appear to be mistakes. It is my opinion that these are not mistakes but rather Poulenc's intentional effort to

¹²⁵ *Thomas Stevens, Trumpet*. John Cerminaro, French Horn, Thomas Stevens, Trumpet and Ralph Sauer, Trombone. Crystal Records #761, 1996.

¹²⁶ *German Brass*. Wolfgang Gaag, French Horn, Konradin Groth, Trumpet and Enrique Crespo, Trombone. Audite #95401, 2004.

¹²⁷ Gary C. Mortenson, 1986. “Historical Perspectives and Analytical Observations on Francis Poulenc’s *Sonata* (1922)”. *International Trumpet Guild*. Vol. 10, No. 3: 10-13. 12.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

create what could be called a "textural shift". Because of this, performers must be diligent in the performance of all the indicated articulations to bring out these various resulting textures.

Upon first glance it would seem that simple misprints and copying errors may be the cause of this inconsistent application of articulations. However, after closer examination, it is apparent that Poulenc's intention is to consistently create contradictions between the instruments. The combination of articulations between the three instruments for specific themes is never repeated in its exact state. This pursuit to create new textures through fluctuation of articulations is achieved in some cases through the alteration of even a single pitch, and in other cases, the lack of articulation marking is in fact the alteration. Example 28 shows the differing adaptations of the various entrances of the main theme found in the first two measures. Notice the subtle differences in the articulations between the three parts and how they are altered in later entrances of the same theme. Also notice the subtle changes in the trombone part as the last note in measure 2 is tenuto, then in m. 16 the rhythm is entirely different and in m. 40 the last note is staccato.

Example 28: Rondeau Mm. 1-2, 15-16 and 39-40

Mm. 1-2

Mm. 15-16

Mm. 39-40

Another interesting aspect of the trombone part in the second example (mm. 15 - 16) is the glissando between the D and its upper octave neighbor. The trombone part is marked *en dehors* (in/at emphasis) indicating that Poulenc wanted this figure to draw significant attention, a slight break from the standardized accompaniment role that the trombone has held through most of the piece. The glissando into the second note is of course idiomatic to the instrument, but the origin or influence of this device is a point of study for many trombone scholars and it is interesting to question how it found its way into this particular piece.¹²⁹ Some theories suggest that the development of jazz may be the cause of this device showing up in classical literature, however, in 1922 jazz had not yet reached a wide audience except for the developing Dixieland and New Orleans styles which did include a technique of trombone playing known as “tail-gate”

¹²⁹Trevor Herbert. *The Trombone*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, c. 2006. 221.

style.¹³⁰ This style was also used heavily in ragtime music to produce a cadential effect, or outlining the major dominant-tonic relationships. A more solid theory, and one that would certainly pertain more closely to this Sonata, is that the device came from circus act music in Europe and North America throughout the nineteenth century. Trombonist Henry Fillmore wrote several band pieces to feature the trombone glissando for popular American band music.¹³¹ Examples of these include “Lassus Trombone” (1915) and “Sally Trombone” (1917). Fillmore used the idiomatic effects as an influence from his own experiences as a circus musician. Poulenc’s enjoyment of popular music as well as circus themes is well documented and this particular influence appears in many of his songs for voice and piano accompaniment as well as many of his instrumental works.¹³²

Textures are often created when at least two instruments use two contrasting articulations. The result can be somewhat confusing to the performers as it will seem as though mistakes are being made and the articulations should be more concise. This is one of the ways Poulenc implements his particular compositional wit and humor. As with the “added-note” technique, it is Poulenc’s intention to create what seems like erroneous music. There are many examples where there are at least two different articulation markings with in the three instrument parts. In addition to the excerpts shown in Example 28, which also fall under this category, Example 29 shows a few more places in the movement where this is the case.

¹³⁰ Trevor Herbert. *The Trombone*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, c. 2006. 290

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 270.

¹³² Vivian Lee Poates Wood. *Poulenc's Songs: An Analysis of Style*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1979. 68.

Example 29: Rondeau Mm. 5-6, M. 23, M. 45 and Mm. 47-48



Mm. 5-6 M. 23

This block contains two musical score excerpts. The first excerpt, labeled 'Mm. 5-6', shows three staves of music. The top two staves feature a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the bottom staff provides a harmonic accompaniment. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present. The second excerpt, labeled 'M. 23', shows a single staff with a melodic line and a dynamic marking of *f*.



M. 45 Mm. 47-48

This block contains two musical score excerpts. The first excerpt, labeled 'M. 45', shows three staves of music with the instruction *très rude* at the top. The second excerpt, labeled 'Mm. 47-48', shows three staves of music with the instruction *sub* at the top.

Poulenc uses articulations to delineate the various sections of the form as well as create new textures. The B section of the movement begins in m. 24 as the horn takes over sole representation of the opening theme (Example 30). To distinguish this section Poulenc indicates that the horn should perform this theme using staccato articulation, the only time in the entire movement where this is the case.

Example 30: Rondeau Mm. 26 & 27

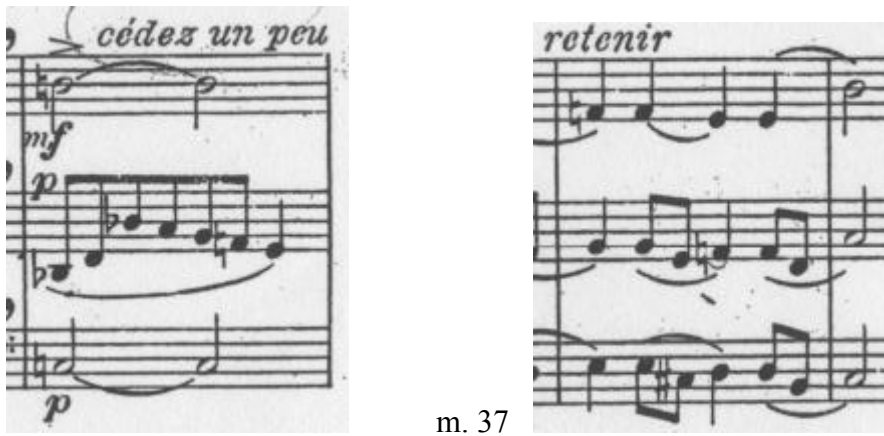


He also applies the term *nerveux* (nervous) to further distinguish this section from the others that employ this theme. Every other time the first measure of this familiar theme is played, no matter the instrument, it is always slurred.

Poulenc's fluctuation of textures is also achieved through inconsistent application of stylistic terms. In m. 4 the horn part includes the terms *tres marque* (very marked). When this exact figure is performed again in m. 16 there is no such marking but the tenuto markings remain. It is also interesting to note that in some cases only one of the three instrument parts may contain a stylistic term, as is seen in m. 16. Another example is found in m. 45 where he applies the terms *tres rude* (very rude) to only the horn part. In other cases, Poulenc made sure to include a style term marking in all three parts such as in m. 18 and 19 with the term *sec.* (abrupt).

Another example of Poulenc using French terms in only one of the three parts lies in mm. 33 - 38 (Example 31). However, this particular case creates a vast confusion and should be considered an error on the part of the composer or publisher. Both the score and the individual parts show that in m. 33 the horn part alone includes the terms *cedez un peu* (slow down and become softer) and later in m. 37 we see the term *retinir* (holding back, slowing down).

Example 31: Rondeau Mm 33 & 37



m. 33

m. 37

It is obvious how this could cause problems between the three parts as the trumpet and trombone should decrease tempo and intensity evenly along with the horn. One instrument could become gradually softer than the others but certainly can not slow down independent of the other instruments. All existing recordings of the Sonata indicate that all three instruments should follow the indications in the horn part, which is to say that these terms were simply omitted erroneously, especially when you consider that the trumpet part, not the horn part, has the moving line and would thus dictate a change in tempo. This error is further established in the fact that the term “Tempo” is included in all three parts at m. 39 (return of the A section), which would imply that all three parts were required to observe the terms included in only the horn part in the previous measures.

There is a significant mistake in the trombone part in m. 32 dealing with the implication of clef. The part is marked with an alto clef which is adhered to would produce the pitches Db, C# (redundant), B, A, G, F# and E. These pitches do not work with the existing harmony and would all produce a dissonance with the other two parts. If the part were to use a tenor clef the pitches would be Bb, A, G, F, E, D and C, all of which work well with the existing harmony and

would not „dash’ with the other two parts as the alto clef performance would. This is evidence enough to assume that the marking of the alto clef is in fact a mistake.

CONCLUSION

Throughout his career, Francis Poulenc was regarded as an emotional man and composer. His friends and family refer to him as someone that “felt the suffering of the world and delighted in it”. His compositions certainly reflect this and the *Sonata for Horn, Trumpet and Trombone* is no exception. The piece ranges in emotion from sorrow and melancholy to jubilant and humorous. Poulenc’s preference for simple nature in qualities like melody, rhythm and basic harmonic patterns like triads and arpeggios only enhance the piece as a whole. The divergence from the extreme elements of the nineteenth century orchestral tradition is achieved but without the sacrifice of any musical impact or integrity.

Hopefully through this study, more students and professionals will become more aware of the validity this piece has to the world of brass chamber music. The *Sonata’s* place among the context of historical development of brass chamber music is crucial. As Poulenc’s only piece for brass ensemble, its impact on the development of the genre is astounding. Furthermore, it has maintained its place as a highly challenging and rewarding piece of music for both performers and audiences.

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