East Carolina Musical Arts Education Foundation
2024-2025 Fisk on Fourth Concert Series presents

New Carolina Sinfonia

Jorge Richter, Artistic Director • David Baskeyfield, organ

Saturday, September 7, 2024 at 7:00 P.M.
St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Greenville, NC

Fanfare pour précéder La Péri — Paul Dukas (1865–1935)

Pavane in F-sharp minor, Op. 50 — Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)

Concerto for organ, timpani, and strings in G minor, FP 93 — Francis Poulenc (1899–1963)

i. Andante – Allegro giocoso
ii. Andante – Allegro giocoso
iii. Subito andante moderato
iv. Tempo allegro, Molto agitato – Très calme, Lent
v. Tempo de l'allegro initial – Tempo d'introduction, Largo

David Baskeyfield, organ

• Intermission •

Symphony No. 3 in C minor, Op. 78 "Organ" — Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921)

i. Adagio – Allegro moderato – Poco adagio
ii. Allegro moderato – Presto – Maestoso – Allegro

The Perkins and Wells Memorial Organ, C.B. Fisk, Opus 126, represents the work of a non-profit foundation towards funding the building of an exceptional pipe organ to enrich the cultural life of Eastern North Carolina, and to educate future organists and church musicians. You can learn more about the organ at **www.ecmaef.org**.

ECMAEF wishes to thank Clay Whittington for the program design, Courtney Buckner for livestreaming the concert, and those who assisted in preparing the space for this evening's concert.

Conductor and Violist **JORGE RICHTER** is associate professor of music at East Carolina University. He holds a BM in violin performance from the Parana State School of Music and Fine Arts in Curitiba, Brazil, an MM in conducting from Andrews University, and a DMA in conducting from Michigan State University where he studied with Leon Gregorian. Richter has held similar positions at Truman State University, Oklahoma State University and the University of Tennessee, has performed at the Utah, Vivace, and Four Seasons chamber music festivals, and has served as guest conductor of the Brasilia Summer Festival Orchestras, Tulsa Youth Symphony, the Oklahoma Youth Symphonies, the Brasilia National Theater Symphony Orchestra, the Oak Ridge Symphony Orchestra, the National Music Conservatoire Symphony Orchestra in Amman, Jordan, the Chungnan Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Sang Rok Festival Orchestra, in South Korea. In addition to his conducting duties, Richter teaches violin, viola and chamber music at East Carolina University.

Commended for his "masterful artistry" (The Diapason), "clarity and rhythmic verve" (Montreal Gazette) and "stunning virtuosity and musicality" (Choir and Organ), **DAVID BASKEYFIELD** performs in the US, Canada, and Europe. Highlights include Chartres Cathedral; St. Sulpice, Paris; St. Bavo, Haarlem; St. Albans Cathedral, UK; Basilique de Notre Dame, Montreal; and Washington National Cathedral. He has inaugurated new instruments by Letourneau and Casavant. Baskeyfield is the Director of Music at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Greenville, NC, and serves as Artistic Director of the East Carolina Musical Arts Education Foundation. He holds an MA in Law from Oxford University, and Master's and Doctoral degrees from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY, where he has also served on the faculty. First prizes in national and international competitions include CIOC (Montreal), St. Albans, Miami, Mader (Los Angeles), Rodland (NJ), and the AGO national improvisation competition. He has been featured on American Public Media's *Pipedreams* and NPR's *With Heart and Voice*, and has recorded for Cantoris, Gothic, ATMA and Acis, including premieres of works by Tarik O'Regan, Philip Wilby, and Arvo Pärt. He has given lectures and masterclasses (repertoire and improvisation) at universities and for numerous AGO chapters, and maintains a large private teaching studio both here in Greenville and online, several students going on to undergraduate and graduate study. He is an avid inshore and offshore fisherman; this has become considerably more convenient since moving to Eastern North Carolina from upstate New York. He shares his house with two springer spaniels, Lucy and Wilbur.

David Baskeyfield is represented in North America by Karen McFarlane Artists, Inc.

New Carolina Sinfonia

Jorge Richter, Artistic Director and Conductor

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Yuan-Ju Liu
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Holland Phillips
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David Baskeyfield

Francis Poulenc was commissioned to write his **Organ Concerto** by the Princesse Edmond de Polignac, née Winaretta Singer, heiress to the eponymous sewing machine fortune. On moving to Paris, the then 22-year old Singer married one Prince Louis de Scey-Montbéliard. A lasting kinship seemed unlikely after a wedding night that reportedly included the bride's climbing on top of an armoire and threatening to kill the groom if he came near her, and following the marriage's annulment she entered into a *marriage lavande* with Prince Edmond de Polignac, whose title she retained after his death in 1901. A great patroness of arts, and an accomplished pianist, the Princesse used her fortune to commission works by numerous young composers of the time, including Igor Stravinsky, Manuel de Falla, and Erik Satie, who was able to fulfill the terms of his commission in a timely manner being kept out of jail by the Princesse's financial intercession. First performances took place at the Princesse's *salon*, a cultural hive where musicians, artists, poets and intellectuals contemplated the banality of the human frame from crushed velvet armchairs in the glow of art deco lamps, champagne and absinthe flowing freely and opulently applied perfume mingling with the smoke of jazz cigarettes.

Salon culture is the essence of Poulenc's musical personality during the 1920s, during which time he was largely considered a composer of light music, praised for its "freshness and insouciant charm," though technically unsophisticated. Poulenc was born into a family that was both musical and extremely wealthy. His father Émile was a joint owner of Poulenc Frères, a successful pharmaceutical company, one of whose branches operates today as a subsidiary of Bayer; his mother Jenny was a skilled pianist from a Parisian family prominent on the arts scene. Francis took piano lessons from the age of five but was forbidden by his father from following a musical career through the *conservatoire* route. Nevertheless, the family's wealth allowed him to continue private study and in 1914 he became a pupil of the pianist Ricardo Viñes, whom Poulenc recalled as "a most delightful man, a bizarre hidalgo with enormous moustachios, a flat-brimmed sombrero in the purest Spanish style, and button boots which he used to rap my shins when I didn't change the pedalling enough." Poulenc's mother had died in 1915 and, following the death of his father two years later, Viñes assumed the role of mentor to his then 18-year old student. He encouraged Poulenc to compose and introduced him to the important figures of the Parisian arts scene, among them Erik Satie. An eccentric figure shunned by the mainstream French musical establishment, Satie was something of a spiritual father in a subculture of young composers attracted to his unconventional compositional style. Poulenc's wealth and lack of formal study caused Satie to view the young man with suspicion, initially dismissing him as a bourgeois amateur. Nevertheless, when he finally relented and admitted him to his circle, Poulenc would rise to the top of Satie's *Nouveaux Jeunes* and become named as one of "*Les Six*," a collective of young composers named, arguably somewhat arbitrarily, by the critic Henri Collet. The group occupied the same countercultural space as the surrealist and cubist movements in literature and visual art but by no means shared a common compositional style: Poulenc's style was uniquely his own and, in spite of his self consciousness at his lack of formal training, his music has proven more enduringly popular with audiences than that of the other *Cinq*.

The Polignac mansion housed an organ built by Cavaillé-Coll in 1892, and the Princesse commissioned poulenc to write an organ concerto in 1934. The concerto was originally to be a piece for chamber orchestra with a relatively simple organ part for the Princesse to play herself. Although not an organist himself, Poulenc loved the instrument and greatly admired the Parisian organists of the day. Imagining the potential of the organ in concerted music, Poulenc quickly abandoned the original concept in favor of a much larger-scale work. An excellent pianist but unfamiliar with organ technique, he undertook a lengthy study of the music of Bach and Buxtehude, the Princesse being particularly keen on the organ music of the baroque period.

The work gave Poulenc some trouble in creating something he considered worthy of all the organ had to offer as a musical instrument and the final piece did not begin to take shape until 1938. Personal circumstances in the four years that had passed since the original commission would bring about significant change both in Poulenc's personal and spiritual life and the music we hear in the organ concerto shows a different side of the composer's personality from the 1920s. In 1936, the death of his closest friend Pierre-Octave Ferroud in a road accident so violent that Ferroud was decapitated affected Poulenc greatly. Almost immediately afterwards, he visited the Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Rocamadour, a pilgrimage site in southwestern France.

From childhood Poulenc had a somewhat ambivalent relationship with the Church. From his father's family he inherited a deep Roman Catholic faith; from his mother, a worldly and artistic side. Once dubbed "half monk, half

miscreant," Ferroud's death reawakened Poulenc's religious faith; his music took on a more serious tone and would come to include a number of sacred choral works. Poulenc considered his organ concerto to be on the fringe of his religious works, writing to Jean Francaix, "The concerto... is not the amusing Poulenc of the Concerto for two pianos, but more like a Poulenc en route for the cloister." By the time of the Concerto's premiere in 1939, the world was a darker place than the roaring 20s, with the outbreak of World War II now imminent. Nevertheless, the gravity that characterizes much of the work is underpinned by Poulenc's irrepressible wit and humor.

The concerto is an extended single work that falls into a number of contrasting sections. In adopting this form, Poulenc acknowledged his study of the free organ works of Buxtehude, which are also continual and sectional rather than the paired preludes and fugues that exemplify Bach's music. By the time of the concerto's completion Princesse Edmond had decided not to perform the organ part herself, and this honor was passed to Maurice Duruflé, *organiste titulaire* of St. Étienne du Mont, in the 5e arrondissement, near the Panthéon. Duruflé, himself a composer, was considered one of the most accomplished organists in Paris and worked with Poulenc on the concerto's registration scheme; as Duruflé reported, Poulenc knew well the colors he desired, but did not have first-hand knowledge of the organ stop combinations that would obtain them. Duruflé's registrations are included in the published music and, although it is necessary to adapt them to each individual organ, they are as integral to the organ part as Poulenc's disposition of the individual instruments in the orchestral score.

The Concerto's opening section recalls that of Bach's Fantasia in G minor, affectionately acknowledging his patroness; the Fantasia was one of the Princesse's favorite works by Bach. It is followed by an *allegro giocoso* recalling the lighthearted Poulenc of happier days. A lyrical section recalls a French baroque organ form with a slow, ornamented melody in the tenor voice. The introspective tone suddenly gives way to build to an aggressive climax, leading to a fast and anguished section of whirling 16ths; the mood will become ever more desperate, almost manic, until its climax in a cadenza, the first time we have heard the organ alone. The soft section that follows is full of pathos and, somehow, regret; a wistful memory of bygone times. The penultimate section is once again the lighthearted and humorous Poulenc of the 1920s, though one might still detect a sardonic note beneath the playfulness. The work concludes with a heartbreaklingly beautiful melody for solo viola against a luscious organ accompaniment on the *voix céleste*, a special registration of two simultaneously sounding pipes with one slightly detuned to give a shimmering, undulating effect. Poulenc now having taken us through the various moods he wished to express, all that is left is for the short coda on full organ to close the work as it began.

The music critic Harold C. Schonberg wrote of **Camille Saint-Saëns**, "It is not generally realized that he was the most remarkable child prodigy in history, and that includes Mozart." At age ten he made his official debut at the Salle Pleyel, in a program that included Mozart's Piano Concerto in B-flat, and Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto. Indeed, he played Beethoven's complete piano works. As a performer he was greatly respected by many musicians on the Parisian scene; it was generally agreed that none could play the organ better than he, and very few the piano. However, as is the case with many great figures, he was somewhat divisive on the Parisian music scene, his exceptional ability attracting a small group of envious detractors. A member of the *Institute de France*, scholar of Greek, Latin, history, philosophy and archeology, and a keen amateur astronomer, his intellect set a high bar in determining which fools he would not suffer gladly and he made powerful enemies. Admittedly, Saint-Saëns' public persona was not helped out by his bluntness, frequently crossing into outright rudeness. On one occasion he cut short his summer vacation to return to Paris to voice his dislike of Debussy's new opera: "I have remained in Paris to speak ill of *Pelléas et Mélisande*." For his own part, Debussy responded, "Above all, I detest sentimentality, and its name is Saint-Saëns." Saint-Saëns lived a long life through a period of quite extraordinary stylistic change: from the era of the Beethovenian Romantic ideal of the suffering artist as hero, exemplified in France by Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique* (1830), to riots at the premier performance of Stravinsky's The Rite of Spring in 1913. As a young man he was enthusiastic about new music of his day, particularly that of Liszt and Wagner. Fauré, a student of Saint-Saëns, recalled, "After allowing the lessons to run over, he would go to the piano and reveal to us those works of the masters from which the rigorous classical nature of our programme of study kept us at a distance and who, moreover, in those far-off years, were scarcely known." However, in a rapidly changing artistic world, Saint-Saëns grew into the role of grumpy old man, his tonal language stubbornly remaining in a purely Romantic aesthetic, predicated upon classical techniques of form and learned counterpoint.

Symphony No. 3 has become one of the most popular symphonies in the repertoire. It is one of those rare works that instantly entered the canon of masterpieces and has remained there ever since. The theme of the finale has even entered into popular culture, most famously in the soundtrack of the 1995 movie Babe. It is often requested to be played during weddings. This has, incidentally, occasionally caused church organists some confusion; when the name of the piece is not recalled, a request for "the theme from that movie with the pig" seems incongruous with the ideals of matrimony. The Symphony was commissioned in 1886 by the London Philharmonic Society and received its premiere at St. James' Hall, conducted by the composer. Saint-Saëns' response to the the original commission of "Some symphonic work" with a fully fledged symphony was unusual. Almost thirty years had passed since Saint-Saëns had composed such a work, his reputation as a concert composer at the time being principally on account of his piano concertos and symphonic poems. The Society's interest in an orchestral or symphonic work by a French composer would have generally precluded an actual symphony since the symphony was largely neglected in France in comparison to its development in Germany; this is probably the reason for the vagueness of the commission.

The same society had also commissioned Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and, indeed, Saint-Saëns followed Beethoven's example in several instances. For example, although divided into two broader sections, themselves dived, the symphony falls *de facto* into the four usual movements of a Beethoven symphony: sonata form; adagio; scherzo; finale, and one cast in the Beethovenian paradigm of darkness to light, *Per aspera ad astra*: "From suffering to the stars." His use of the organ might be taken as analogous to the chorus in the Ninth Symphony's finale (known to anglophones as "Joyful, joyful, we adore thee"). The work is sometimes mistakenly referred to as an organ concerto. The organ here functions as a part of the orchestra, enriching the texture in the slow movement without emerging prominently, and of course enhancing it considerably in the finale.

The decision to cast the symphony in C underlines the confidence of Saint-Saëns' writing: C minor is the key of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, probably the most famous work in all symphonic repertoire, which composers tended to avoid with a somewhat superstitious sense of trepidation and deference to the great master. In fact, to compose a symphony in C major was to make a very public statement in signaling that the composer believed himself to have reached a stage in his career where he was worthy to use the Beethoven key. This of course carried the significant risk of condemnation should the work be considered not to have met that high bar, and a composer would almost invariably reserve the key for what he intended to be his final work in the form. Indeed, although asked to compose another symphony following the resounding success of its French premiere in 1887, Saint-Saëns would never again return to the genre. The work is a kind of history of his own career: virtuoso piano passages; brilliant orchestral writing; and the sound of the organ suitable for a cathedral or large concert halls, which were typically equipped with the instrument. In Saint-Saëns' own words: "I gave everything to it I was able to give. What I have here accomplished, I will never achieve again."

As if to underline the finality, even monumentality, of the symphony, Saint-Saëns took the Beethovenian paradigm of darkness to light to its very pinnacle. As a church musician - *Organiste Titulaire* at the society church of the Madeleine - plainchant held as a large a place of his musical life as his compositions for the concert hall, and the motto theme in the Third Symphony is derived from the *Dies irae*, "Day of wrath," a sequence from the requiem mass describing the day of judgment. In a technique developed most extensively by Liszt, to whose memory Saint-Saëns dedicated the work, the theme is transformed over the course of the symphony, culminating in its triumphant transfiguration in the final movement, the unambiguous declaration that we have reached the end of our journey, by a single, held chord; and surely the most famous C major chord in western music. That most powerful moment could have been played by full orchestra with equal impact in purely musical terms, and he fact that it is given to the organ is significant. The symphony is built on a sacred theme invoking the moment where the Christian soul stands in judgment before God, and the announcement that good has prevailed being made by the instrument of the Church must surely be the ultimate expression of that sentiment. The time of trial is over and the soul, at the last, enters Heaven.

Paul Dukas' ***La Péri*** is a one-act ballet, a *Poème dansé en un tableau*, premiered in 1912 with choreography by Ivan Clustine, the Russian ballet master of the Paris *Opéra*. In Persian folklore, *Parī* are depicted as winged creatures of immense beauty. They are considered among the more benign supernatural entities, though can be capricious and are generally to be handled with care. Dukas' ballet concerns Alexander the Great's encounter with a *Parī* during his search for the Flower of Immortality. Iskender (Alexander the Great's name in Persian) discovers the Flower, a lotus, guarded by a *Parī* at the edge of the world. As he attempts to take the flower, the *Parī* awakens and begs him to return it, that she might enter Paradise. Iskender delights at the power he now believes has over the *Parī*. She performs a dance, gradually moving closer until she is able to wrest back the flower; as the *Parī* slowly disappears into the light and returns to Paradise, Iskender, left alone, realizes that immortality is not something to be taken but earned through selflessness and compassion, and accepts his fate with calmness.

Dukas' score is a lush and mystical depiction of the ethereal nature of the story. Although its fame has been eclipsed by his symphonic scherzo, The Sorcerer's Apprentice, the ballet is a masterpiece, representing some of Dukas finest writing. Dukas was intensely self-critical and destroyed many of his compositions; he almost destroyed *La Péri* too, but it was saved at the insistence of his friends. Following Debussy's appearance on the early 20th century Parisian music scene, French musicians were divided into conservative and progressive factions, and Dukas managed to adhere to neither but retained the admiration of both. This is exemplified in his ballet, a blend of tonal harmony and impressionism in a uniquely French musical language.

Gabriel Fauré composed the *Pavane* in the summer of 1887; it received its premiere by the Orchestre Lamoureux, which played an important part in Paris' musical life, giving weekly concerts and premiering several noteworthy works including Ravel's Piano Concerto in G major and Debussy's *La Mer*. The pavan is a historical form, a slow courtly dance popular in the sixteenth century. Particularly associated with Italy and Spain, the name is considered to be derived either from the Italian dance *padovanna* ("of Padua") or the Spanish *pavón*: a peacock. Fauré did not consider his own pavan particularly important, but from the outset it has enjoyed immense popularity and, in spite of its modest scale, is firmly established as one of his most beloved works. Fauré first wrote the work for choir and orchestra, but it is nowadays most often heard in its orchestral version. Guided by a delicate, flowing melody, the work's gentle rhythm and understated dynamics create an atmosphere of quiet reflection: a perfect example of Fauré's graceful and refined voice balancing the wistful with the elegant.

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The mission of the Foundation is to maintain and promote the C.B. Fisk, Opus 126 pipe organ of St. Paul' s Episcopal Church as a cultural treasure for the benefit of Greenville and other communities throughout Eastern North Carolina, through concerts, student development and educational offerings.

The continuation of the work of ECMAEF is dependent upon contributions from individuals who attend our concerts and who support our mission. You are cordially invited to help sustain ECMAEF by becoming a "Friend of the Fisk." All contributions are tax-deductible under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

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David Baskeyfield

Friday, October 18
7:00pm
Silent Movie:
The Hunchback of Notre Dame

Friday, November 22
7:00pm
Back to Back Bach

The S. Rudolph Alexander Performing Arts Series

The Fletcher Series • A.J. Fletcher Recital Hall, 7:30pm

Friday, September 13, 2024
Duo Exaudi
ft. René Izquierdo
& Elina Chekan
classical guitar

Friday, October 25, 2024
Quarteto Nuevo
world / chamber / jazz

Thursday, November 14, 2024
Ruckus
high-energy early music