

Tomaso Albinoni – Oboe Concerto in D minor, Op. 9, No. 2

Tomaso Giovanni Albinoni (1671–1751) was a Venetian composer best known for his instrumental music, particularly his concertos and sonatas. Born into a wealthy family, he was able to pursue music without financial constraints, referring to himself as a *Dilettante Veneto*, a term that in 18th-century Italy, signified an accomplished, independent musician rather than an amateur. While he composed as many as 81 operas, most were never published and are now lost. His instrumental music, however, gained widespread recognition, with nine collections of sonatas and concertos published across Europe.

Albinoni had a particular affinity for the oboe, an instrument still relatively new to Italian music at the time. He is credited as one of the first Italian composers to write oboe concertos, introducing the instrument as a prominent solo voice in his *Concerto a cinque* collections, Op. 7 (1715) and Op. 9 (1722). These works helped to establish the oboe as a lyrical and expressive solo instrument in Baroque concertos.

The *Concerto in D minor for Oboe and Strings, Op. 9, No. 2* is considered one of Albinoni's finest. It beautifully showcases the oboe's dual nature both virtuosic and deeply expressive through three contrasting movements. The opening *Allegro* is bold and energetic, with spirited dialogue between the soloist and orchestra, driven by dotted rhythms and dynamic contrasts that create an atmosphere of excitement. The second movement, *Adagio*, is the emotional heart of the concerto. The oboe's soaring, lyrical line floats above delicate orchestral textures, evoking a sense of poignancy and introspection. This movement highlights Albinoni's gift for melody, as well as his ability to craft music of remarkable intimacy. The final *Allegro* brings a lively, dance-like conclusion, with engaging interplay between soloist and ensemble. Its bright energy and intricate passagework ensure a joyful and satisfying resolution.

Marina Dranishnikova Poème for Oboe and Piano

Marina Dranishnikova (1929–1994) was a Russian composer and pianist, though little is known about her life and work today. The daughter of a prominent conductor, she studied piano at the Leningrad Conservatory with Nadezhda Golubovskaya. *Poème* for oboe and piano, composed in 1953, remains her only known published work.

Dedicated to Vladimir Kurlin, who was a solo oboist of the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra, *Poème* is believed to reflect Dranishnikova's own emotions following a tragic love affair with Kurlin. The piece is deeply romantic in nature, with sweeping melodies, expressive rubato, and moments of longing intertwined with lyrical beauty. The oboe's soaring lines contrast with a virtuosic and independent piano part, making it an equally demanding and rewarding piece for both performers.

Poème oscillates between *largo* and *allegretto* sections, with familiar motives restated in unique ways. Dranishnikova's use of chromaticism, mixed meters, and asymmetrical phrase structures creates an unpredictable yet cohesive narrative. Over the course of its approximately

nine-minute duration, the piece explores nine key areas and twelve different time signatures, blending tenderness with moments of rhythmic complexity and harmonic richness.

Though *Poème* was published in Moscow in 1953, it remained largely unknown outside of Russia until oboist Marc Fink rediscovered it while researching 20th-century Russian oboe music in the libraries of the St. Petersburg and Moscow Conservatories. Following its international premiere at the 2003 International Double Reed Society Convention, *Poème* has since gained recognition as a significant and expressive addition to the oboe repertoire.

Richard Strauss – Oboe Concerto in D Major, TrV 292

Richard Strauss's *Oboe Concerto* is a remarkable work from the composer's final years, written in 1945 when he was 81. The inspiration for the piece came from an unlikely source which is John de Lancie, an American oboist serving in the U.S. Army, who casually asked Strauss if he had ever considered writing for the instrument. Though initially dismissive, Strauss later took up the idea, crafting a concerto that has since become a cornerstone of the oboe repertoire.

The concerto unfolds in a single, continuous arc, with three movements seamlessly connected:

- I. **Allegro moderato** – A graceful orchestral introduction leads into an expansive oboe solo, soaring effortlessly across over fifty measures without a break.
- II. **Andante** – A moment of lyricism and introspection, where the oboe weaves through Strauss's signature harmonic richness with elegance and poise.
- III. **Vivace – Allegro** – The finale is light and playful, featuring dance-like passages and waltz-like gestures before concluding with characteristic charm.

Strauss's orchestration is surprisingly intimate as he deliberately excludes additional oboes, allowing the soloist's sound to take center stage. The interplay between oboe and orchestra is intricate yet always transparent, blending lyricism with a touch of virtuosity. In many ways, this concerto reflects Strauss's late style: refined, nostalgic, and effortlessly melodic, making it one of the most treasured works in the oboe repertoire.