



Les Boys

by the Duo Jatekok

It was during the exhibition on Misa Sert at the Musée d'Orsay in 2012 that we first discovered the duo Gold and Fisdale, nicknamed "The Boys". We came across them again while recording our 1st CD, precisely in Barber's dedication in "Souvenirs". We very quickly decided to look into this pioneering duo from the forties, who inspired many composers from that time and who established the art of performing as a piano duo on big international stages.

Poulenc, Tailleferre, Auric, Milhaud, Cage, Berio, Barber, Bowles, Brubeck and many others composed pieces for them which are large-scale and very diverse in style. With a deeper research, we found that "The Boys", as they were nicknamed by "Les six", also tried their hand at writing biographies of artists such as Sarah Bernhardt and Misa Sert.

They were at the heart of the musical explosion in both New York and Paris and moved into the most celebrated of artistic circles.

They developed professional relationships and friendships with figures from very varied backgrounds such as Truman Capote, James Schuyler, George Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, Gertrude Stein, etc. Their original character and their out-of-the-ordinary multidisciplinary artistic career made us want to devote a recording to them so that they could be rediscovered, and to show the significant role they played in the development of the 20th century repertoire for two pianos.

Among the many works dedicated to them, or works they have created, we chose to record the magnificent Sonata by Poulenc as well as his *Elégie*. The ballet *Points on Jazz* by Dave Brubeck as well as the 3 pieces by Trotignon. We think these pieces best represent the duo's spirit of openness, the ease with which they moved from "classic" to more "jazzy" pieces, and their desire to encourage musical creation and discovering new composers.

A short biography of the “Boys”



It was while studying at the Juilliard School in New York that Arthur Gold (1917-1990) and Robert Fizdale (1920-1995) first met. Both were of Russian origin and had started with music very early, the one in Toronto, Canada, the other in Chicago, Illinois. Gold was studying with Josef and Rosina Lhévinne while Fizdale worked with Ernest Hutcheson. Their respective teachers' practices of 2 pianos and 4 hands encouraged them to immerse themselves in this undeveloped musical sphere. After acquiring a solid base as soloists, they decided to work exclusively as a duo, and to devote themselves to introducing this unappreciated repertoire to the world, and to developing it by encouraging a number of composers to compose pieces for this ensemble. They founded their duo in 1943 and gave their first recital in New York where they played, for the first time, 2 pieces for prepared pianos by John Cage. It was the beginning of a long career that lasted more than fifty years and took them all over the world.

They launched a European tour in 1949 and in particular played Poulenc's and Mendelssohn's concertos with the National Orchestra in Paris. The press showered praise on them and the public were enthralled by their vitality and musicality together with the breathtaking rigour of their ensemble. For the sake of precision, they would start to play in public side by side and not face-to-face, as was customary.

In 1955, it was the first piano duo to sign with one of the most prestigious labels: Columbia Records.

Gold and Fizdale took care not to put transcriptions in their concert programme, to develop the repertoire and encourage composers to write specifically for this ensemble.

In 1972 they were the first soloists to play with the New York Philharmonic in the new hall at the Lincoln Center. For the occasion, they performed the concerto which Berio had dedicated to them.

In the 80s, Fizdale began to have problems with osteoarthritis and had to reduce his concert performances. This gave them the chance to take up writing and to showcase influential women such as Misa Sert and Sarah Bernhardt. And just as an aside, they even had a food column in *Vogue* and published a cookbook!

Their love of research and work was rewarded with them being given the Ingram Merrill Foundation Prize, awarded for a study of Schubert's music for four hands. Regularly invited to appear on television and the radio, Gold and Fizdale wished to spread music and give it a place in the heart of the society in which they lived.

It is still very worthwhile for us to replay their recordings because they worked with the composers of their day and these recordings are a great musical testimony.



The CD programme

Among French composers, the Boys had a particular connection with Poulenc. The duo met the composer during their European trip in 1948. The following year, they gave their first concert in France with the Concerto for 2 Pianos by Poulenc. At the end of their performance, Poulenc announced that he was going to write a sonata for them. The sonata was completed in 1953, with this dedication: "for Gold and Fizdale with as much friendship as admiration."

In 1959, Poulenc, wrote *Elégie* for the Boys in memory of Marie-Blanche de Polignac, who gave the composer great support and counsel, and had died the previous year. "My children," he wrote, "the *Elégie* is finished. Tell me honestly what you think of this piece. It is easy, perhaps too easy for a serious critique. Think of Marie Blanche when you play it! "

Brubeck, a legend of the American jazz scene, thought their recording of his piece "Points on Jazz" set the standard for it. It was Dave Brubeck who composed the piece, but it was his brother Howard who wrote it out, taking notes of Dave's improvisations right as they happened. This provided a very original piece for the repertoire for two pianos. Brubeck himself was one of Darius Milhaud's students, which highlights how interwoven the destinies of France and the United States were when it came to music.

We decided to record the 3 pieces by Trotignon first of all because the 2nd piece is dedicated to Poulenc, and also because it was important for us to be in a similar approach to the "boys": play music written for 2 pianos and by contemporary composers.

Poulenc

Sonate à 2 pianos
Elégie

Brubeck

Points on Jazz

Baptiste Trotignon

3 pieces

Other Programmes around the BOYS

2 PIANOS

- Sonate by Poulenc
- Points on Jazz by Brubeck
- La Valse by Ravel
- 3 pieces by Trotignon

4 HANDS

- Sonate à 4 mains by Poulenc
- Six épigraphes antiques by Debussy
- Le Boeuf sur le toit by Milhaud
- Souvenirs by Barber

CONCERTOS FOR 2 PIANOS

- Concerto by Poulenc
- Concerto by Bartok (their version is considered to set the standard for this work)
- Concerto by Berio (which is dedicated to the Boys)
- Concertos by Mendelssohn (who they discovered and promoted)

CONCERT 2 PIANOS + CHOIR

- Picnic Cantata by Paul Bowles
- Four dialogues for 2 voices and 2 pianos by Ned Rorem



Special Projet

Based on the location for the concert,
get in touch about the programme with a chef
from the region who would bring a taste of the
Boys' recipes to the public!
After having a meal at their home, Bernstein,
a great friend of the duo, wrote:

Gastronomic Gurus, Grands seigneurs
Old-fashioned enough to counteract
La nouvelle Cuisine, Les Nouvelles Moeurs ;
Dynamic chef, you are in fact

A culinary wonder, perhaps the most
Naturally joyous, deeply delighting
Dear, considerate double-host

For miles around ? And while I'm writing
I might just add these qualities :
Zest, wisdom and utter ease.
Dear Duo, from Felicia and me
All thanks to you, most tenderly.
Long life, good health, and all the rest.
Ever, your grateful double-guest.

Duo Jatekok

"The two young women in Duo Jatekok have it all: dynamic precision and expressive vigour, exuberance on the keyboard and a multilingual touch, and most of all, a kind of jubilant harmony" *Le Monde*

It was in 2007 that Nairi Badal and Adélaïde Panaget officially formed their duo and, on the advice of Claire Désert, performed a contemporary piece by Kurtág: Játékok. This work which would crystallise their harmony together consists of short lyrical miniatures that are meditative, full of feeling and sensitivity. Jatekok, meaning "game" in Hungarian, an idea that would become their signature.

Winners of two major international piano duo competitions, in Rome in 2011 and Ghent in 2013, trained by N. Angelich, B. Engerer and even the Artemis Quartet, they have built up a repertoire that reflects their dynamism and expressiveness. Their first album, Danses (Dances), released under the Mirare label in 2015, has been unanimously hailed by the press and the duo is going to present it at major festivals and on great classical music stages: the Festival of La Roque d'Anthéron, Les Folles Journées in Nantes, the Warsaw Opera House, the Cité de la Musique (City of Music) in Paris, Flagey in Brussels, the Dvorak Museum in Prague, the Borsellino Theatre in Sicily, and even the Auditorium Del Massimo in Rome.

Beyond performing classical pieces in front of well-informed audiences, Duo Jatekok like to share their love for an art form which is sometimes not easily accessible for the majority of people. They thus take many opportunities to connect with the public in original ways, whether through taking the mic to explain the origin of a piece or a composer's history, performing the Nutcracker with sand artist Marina Sosnina, or even bringing the Little Prince to life together with the actor Julien Cottureau.

Nairi Badal and Adélaïde Panaget find a way to reach audiences who recognise their sincerity, unaffectedness, talent and authenticity. Jatekok: playing the piano, four hands, two pianos, classic, contemporary, with the public, with other musicians, and other artists. The essence of the Duo is the playing itself.



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