



OBOE

RECORDING REVIEWS

The French Accent: Original performances of Poulenc, Auric and others

French composers (Historical recordings, 1928-1958 with legendary oboists **Roland Lamorlette, Louis Bas, Myrtille Morel, Pierre Pierlot, Louis Bleuzet, Louis Gromer,** and **Louis Gaudard.**

Oboe Classics CC2025

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This recording is, quite simply, a treasure trove of inspiration. Performance practices of composers performing their own works, with musicians for whom these works were written and who participated in their premieres provide an invaluable window into French woodwind artistry from 1928-1958. Another factor one must consider upfront is the quality of the recorded sound. In recent years, many historical recordings have been scrubbed nearly free of surface noise. Further improvements have brought enhanced presence, depth, and a broader range of dynamics. That being said, it is still a given that recordings made between 60 and 90 years ago will not have the immediacy, intimacy, and overall sound quality that we hear as the norm in recordings made today. Advice to self: “*Get over it*”. Over a period of a few weeks, hearing these tracks four to five times, one’s hearing aptitude evolves toward an increasing involvement with the musicians, the quality of the performance, and the music itself. In a word, it takes a few hearings to adapt to the historical sound world, but this is rewarded in the richness of the musical pleasures herein.

Included in this attractive CD package is a 24 page booklet including a listing of compositions, movement titles, timing, and detailed personnel for all 19 tracks. Oboist and scholar **Geoffrey Burgess** provides an informative and well written essay: “*Playing with a French Accent*”. Burgess also authors thorough, detailed track notes, covering essential references to the composer, historical context, the genesis of the music, and the performers. Fabled French ensembles such as the Société Taffanel des instruments à vent, Trio d’Anches de Paris, and the Quintette à vent Français, are covered in the context of their formation, concert activities, and associations with composers and recording companies.

Of special interest are Poulenc performing his wonderful trio in a recording from 1928, and the Taffanel group playing the ever charming “Gavotte” from the Thuille *Sextet*, featuring no less than composer Erwin Schulhoff as pianist. French Woodwind trios by Auric and Ferroud are performed by the exquisite Trio d’Anches and Roussel’s attractive *Divertissement* is played beautifully by the French Quintet which includes Rampal and Pierlot.

The performances here range from quite good to superb. There are occasional discrepancies of ensemble, intonation, and imperfection of technique and articulation. Yet, the overwhelming effect is that of an open door into a distant world of inspired creation, elegant French woodwind playing, and a chance to hear for oneself how these pieces were performed at their inception.

Stephen Colburn, Milwaukee, Wisconsin