

Pedagogical Wealth in the Clarinet Quartets of Yvonne Desportes  
[REDACTED], B.M., M.M.

Lecture Recital Proposal Prepared for the Degree of  
DOCTORATE OF MUSICAL ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS  
Fall 2019

Committee Members:

[REDACTED], Major Professor  
[REDACTED], Related Field Professor  
[REDACTED], Committee Member

## **Purpose**

In recent years, much progress has been made in the rediscovery of music by women composers; however, clarinet music by women composers in the early 20th century continues to be under-researched. In particular the clarinet music of the 1932 *Prix de Rome* recipient, Yvonne Desportes, has been overlooked.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this dissertation is to provide a brief overview of the clarinet works by Yvonne Desportes with a focus on her clarinet quartet music as a pedagogical tool for the development of fundamental clarinet and ensemble skills such as tone, technique, and musical style.

## **Significance and State of Research**

Desportes was a prolific composer and completed over 500 works.<sup>2</sup> Her elevated status as a recipient of the *Prix de Rome* and professor at the Paris Conservatory (1948-1978) allowed many works for clarinet to be published; however, many of these pieces are undervalued and unknown despite the high quality of her writing. This might be due, in part, to the small amount of existing scholarly literature and recordings of Desportes' music. In very recent years, a few sources have been added to the limited research available about Desportes' life and other *musiciennes* alike. The book, *Les femmes lauréates du Premier Prix de Rome de composition musicale 1913-1966*, is one of the most significant sources currently available that contains detailed information about the lives of *musiciennes* like Desportes. Unfortunately, this source does not speak in-depth about the music of each composer. Similarly, a dissertation by Laura Hamer also contains information about the social contexts that Desportes and other *musiciennes*

---

<sup>1</sup> Hamer, "Musiciennes: Women Musicians in France during the Interwar Years, 1919-1939," ii-iii.

<sup>2</sup> Briscoe, "Desportes, Yvonne."

endured. Hamer's dissertation does contain a limited examination of the music of Tailleferre but does not examine the music of other composers.

Very few commercial recordings of her works exist, and those that do are not readily available in established online music catalogs or streaming services such as NAXOS or iTunes. Fortunately, there are two existing commercial recordings that feature a few of her clarinet quartets; however, each of these recordings is over 20 years old. The most recent is a CD recorded by the Thurston Clarinet Quartet, *Masquerade*, that features a performance of Desportes' *French Suite*. The only other commercial recording is an LP record of the Capital University Clarinet Quartet performing the *French Suite* and the *Normandie Suite*. Due to the difficulty in finding these recordings, it is not surprising that Desportes' clarinet quartets are overlooked and rarely programmed. A total of five music reviews about Desportes' clarinet quartets is available in *The Clarinet*;<sup>3</sup> however, these reviews are no more than a few sentences of description.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the music catalogs of standard sheet music providers and education catalogs, such as the 2019-2020 University Scholastic League Prescribed Music List and the New York State School Music Association Solo & Ensemble Music Catalog, reveal that many of Desportes' clarinet quartets except for *French Suite*, are not well-known or performed often in the United States. Luyben Music is the only United States catalog that lists six out of eleven original clarinet quartet works by Desportes.

Of her available repertoire for clarinet, the most common instrumentation Desportes composed for was the clarinet quartet. According to the catalog curated by her son, Michel

---

<sup>3</sup> *The Clarinet* is the International Clarinet Association journal.

<sup>4</sup> Klug, Howard. "Clarinet Pedagogy Survey: Appropriate Clarinet Quartet Literature for High School and College Levels," 13.

Gemignani, Desportes composed eleven original clarinet quartets of varying skill levels.<sup>5</sup> Her clarinet quartets are rich with common practice materials since they avoid the use of serialism and neoclassicism often employed by composers during the 20th century. The musical stylings of Baroque music, the Mighty Five, early Stravinsky, and Ravel greatly influenced Desportes' compositions.<sup>6</sup> These styles are especially apparent in her clarinet quartet music which often employ baroque forms, folk melodies, parallel 5ths, shifting tonal centers, and heterophony. Yvonne Desportes' engaging and challenging compositional style makes the study and performance of Yvonne Desportes' clarinet quartets a desirable choice for developing the performance skills of young clarinetists. Additionally, the writing in her quartets challenges each clarinetist equally, whereas the skill levels of the individual parts in clarinet quartet repertoire are often unequal. Typically, the first and second clarinetists play the most melodic and technically demanding material while the third and fourth parts are left to fill out the harmonic structure in less engaging ways.

This project will also contribute to the available pedagogical sources for clarinet quartets. The U.S. Army Band Video Clinic Series is the only pure pedagogical resource available to clarinet quartets. Performances of entire works consumes a majority of the content in the video though the video does provide brief information about fundamental skills as well as a few demonstrations of rehearsal techniques. Though the U.S. Army quartet performed the music well, the video and sound quality are lacking due to outdated recording technology. The only other available source pertaining to the pedagogy of clarinet quartets is Howard Klug's brief

---

<sup>5</sup> Gemignani, *Yvonne Desportes*, 31-37.

<sup>6</sup> Hamer, "Musiciennes: Women Musicians in France during the Interwar Years, 1919-1939," 282-283.

article addressing a variety of appropriate clarinet quartets for high school and college students. His article mentioned the technical challenges of each piece, but the content of the article is similar in style to an annotated bibliography.<sup>7</sup> Other sources for clarinet quartets tend to appear as either music reviews, bibliographies with minimal annotations, or analyses of the music by a specific composer.

### **Method**

This document will be split into two parts. The first portion will include biographical information about Yvonne Desportes and provide a brief overview of her clarinet works, outlining the significance of Desportes' the clarinet quartets. Additionally, this section will propose that Desportes' clarinet quartets are effective pedagogical tools due to her compositional style and equal difficulty throughout all four parts.

The second portion of this project will examine three quartets appropriate for undergraduate college students: *Suite Italienne*, *French Suite*, and *Les saisons*. Each quartet will be broken down into three sections pertaining to the fundamental topics of tone, technique, and musical style. Since Desportes' clarinet quartets are considerable in length, only one movement per fundamental will be examined (for a total of three movements examined per quartet) to demonstrate how ensemble performance can improve specific individual performance skills. Each movement will first examine Desportes' compositional style and establish why the selection is an appropriate choice for improving a specific fundamental. Then each movement will be broken down with strategies addressing concepts that can also be applied to other clarinet quartet repertoire.

---

<sup>7</sup> Klug, Howard. "Clarinet Pedagogy Survey: Appropriate Clarinet Quartet Literature for High School and College Levels," 12-14.

The *Sarabande* movement from the *French Suite* provides an appropriate example for discussing the fundamentals of musical style. All four parts, with the exception of a slight deviation in the fourth clarinet part, are homorhythmic thus requiring all performers to agree upon and match musical style. This makes the *Sarabande* an effective teaching tool of this fundamental skill. While the *sarabande* is not technically demanding, it does require historical knowledge of the baroque dance form to ensure correct interpretation and note lengths. The *sarabande* is a popular Baroque instrumental dance originating from Latin America and Spain in the 16th century and later popularized in France and Italy in the 17th century.<sup>8</sup> The traditional French *sarabande* style is in a slow three pattern that favors four-bar phrases, as compared to the fast compound meter of Italian *sarabandes*. This knowledge drastically changes how to interpret the phrase and style markings printed in the score. Without prior knowledge of this Baroque dance, students might be tempted to perform the opening quarter note too short based on the staccato indication in the score. Fortunately, the score, published in 1967 by Southern Music Co., graciously provides a rhythmic transcription at the bottom indicating how the length of notes should be treated.<sup>9</sup>

The correct styling of this movement becomes more important when all four clarinets are performing together. Students should be encouraged to practice individually; however, the *sarabande* style of each quartet member must match in both length and energy. To improve the accuracy of style amongst all clarinetists, two simple rehearsal techniques may be employed. A first rehearsal technique requires the students to stylize the first two measures by using speech only. Syllables corresponding to the length of the printed notes are assigned and ‘performed’

---

<sup>8</sup> Hudson, Richard, and Meredith Ellis Little. "Sarabande.

<sup>9</sup>Desportes, Yvonne. *French Suite: for four B b clarinets*, 5.

together using the assigned syllables. The tactic of speech is helpful to remove the distraction of the clarinet and direct the focus upon the concept of matching style amongst the members of the quartet. After the quartet can successfully speak together, the ensemble may perform as usual.

A second rehearsal technique, often employed by the Canadian Brass Quintet and the U.S. Army Clarinet Quartet, is effective in matching style among performers.<sup>1011</sup> The first two measures of the *Sarabande* are an appropriate choice to determine if all four members are performing with matching style. All members of the quartet, with a slight deviation in the fourth clarinet part, have the same printed rhythm (quarter, half-note). In order to determine if each member is matching style, the first two measures should be performed together and then repeated four more times with only one member playing at a time. This activity will reveal any differences in energy and note length, effectively demonstrating the importance of matching style. This pedagogical approach to clarinet quartet literature adds variety to the available teaching tools for teachers and students to develop individual fundamentals while providing students with an opportunity to learn from and collaborate with other musicians.

It should be noted that this project is currently awaiting the response from several publishers that have been contacted for copyright permission to include excerpts from the music. Records of correspondence can be found in the appendix of this proposal.

## **Tentative Chapter Headings**

### I. Introduction

#### A. Yvonne Desportes Biography

1. This section will provide a biographical overview of her background, accomplishments, and compositional influences in her music.

---

<sup>10</sup> Barnes, Walter H. *The Canadian Brass book of advanced quintets: with discussion and techniques*, 12 & 26.

<sup>11</sup> Hughes, Fred, et al. *Improving Your Clarinet Section Through The Use of Clarinet Quartets*.

## II. Women *Musiciennes*: Societal Contexts in which Desportes Lived

### A. Societal Contexts

1. This section will discuss possible reasons for Desportes' current obscurity through a brief examination of French societal expectations and restrictions placed on women during her life.

## III. The Clarinet Music of Yvonne Desportes

### A. Brief Overview of Clarinet Works

1. This section will provide the reader with a basic knowledge of Desportes' available clarinet works. Additionally, this section will point out the significance of her clarinet quartet repertoire and will make the argument that her clarinet quartets are effective pedagogical tools.

## IV. Pedagogical Applications in the Clarinet Quartets of Yvonne Desportes

### A. *Suite Italienne*

1. Tone – Representative Movement from *Suite Italienne*
  - a) This section will include discussions about tone and selections in the quartet that will improve this specific skill.
2. Technique – Representative movement from *Suite Italienne*
  - a) This section will include discussions about technique and selections in the quartet that will improve this specific skill.
3. Musical style – Representative movement from *Suite Italienne*
  - a) This section will include discussions about musical style and selections in the quartet that will improve this specific skill.

### B. *French Suite*

1. Tone – Representative movement from *French Suite*
2. Technique – Representative movement from *French Suite*
3. Musical Style – Representative movement from *French Suite*

### C. *Les saisons*

1. Tone – Representative movement from *Les saisons*
2. Technique – Representative movement from *Les saisons*
3. Musical Style – Representative movement from *Les saisons*

## V. Conclusion

- A. The conclusion will revisit the current obscurity of Desportes and promote the study of her music. The quality of her compositional style will be highlighted along with the postulation that clarinet quartets are effective pedagogical tools for the improvement of both ensemble and individual performance skills.



## VI. Appendix

### A. Annotated Bibliography of Clarinet Quartets by Desportes

1. This section will include annotations of each published clarinet quartet composed by Yvonne Desportes.

### B. Complete List of Works Including Clarinet by Desportes

1. This section will include a table of all works involving clarinet and will be organized based on instrumentation. Dates, publisher information, and will be provided when available.

## Bibliography

Anderson, John. "New Music Reviews." *The Clarinet* 11, no. 1 (Fall): 59, 1983.

Barnes, Walter H. *The Canadian Brass book of advanced quintets: with discussion and techniques*. Toronto: Canadian Brass Publications, 1986.

Barnes, Walter H. *The Canadian Brass book of favorite quintets: quintet arrangements at the intermediate level with discussion and techniques*. Winona: Hal Leonard Pub. Corp, 1988. Bernstein, Jane A. *Women's Voices Across Musical Worlds*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004.

Bertho-Woolliams, Carole. *Les femmes lauréates du Premier Prix de Rome de composition musicale 1913-1966*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2019.

Briscoe, James R. "Desportes, Yvonne." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 14 Nov. 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.07641>.

Parker, Robert Carlisle. "A Performance Guide for Trombone Quartet: An Application of Pedagogical Concepts and Techniques for Developing Ensembles." DMA diss., The University of Iowa, 2018. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Ellsworth, Jane. *A Dictionary for the Modern Clarinetist*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

Fausser, Annegret. "'La Guerre En Dentelles': Women and the 'Prix De Rome' in French Cultural Politics." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51, no. 1 (1998): 83-129. doi:10.2307/831898.

Gemignani, Michel. *Yvonne Desportes*. Paris: Gemignani, 1995.

- Hamer, Laura Ann. "Musiciennes: Women Musicians in France during the Interwar Years, 1919-1939." PhD diss., Cardiff University, Wales, 2009. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Hickey's Music Center. "NYSSMA Solo and Ensemble Catalog." Accessed November 14, 2019. <https://www.hickeys.com/music/contests/NYSSMA/>.
- Hudson, Richard, and Meredith Ellis Little. "Sarabande." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 17 Nov. 2019. <https://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2147/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.24574>
- Hughes, Fred, et al. *Improving Your Clarinet Section Through The Use of Clarinet Quartets*. Fort Meade, MD: U.S. Army Field Band, 1990. Accessed November 14, 2019. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eeD7xnj\\_XhU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eeD7xnj_XhU).
- Hyer, Brian. "Homophony." *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 16 Nov. 2019. <https://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2147/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.13291>.
- Klug, Howard. "Clarinet Pedagogy Survey: Appropriate Clarinet Quartet Literature for High School and College Levels." *The Clarinet* 18, no. 1 (November - December): 12-14, 1990.
- Loft, Abram. *How to Succeed in an Ensemble: Reflections on a Life in Chamber Music*. Portland, Or: Amadeus Press, 2003.
- Luyben Music. "Luyben Music > Clarinet Catalog." Accessed November 14, 2019. <http://luybenmusic.com/section.asp>.
- Mohler, John. "New Music Review." *The Clarinet* 14, no. 1 (Fall): 47, 1986.
- Moore, Christopher Lee. "Music in France and the Popular Front (1934–1938): Politics, Aesthetics and Reception." PhD diss., McGill University, 2007. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Pendle, Karin, and Robert Zierolf. "Composers of Modern Europe, Israel, Australia, and New Zealand," in *Women in music: a research and information guide*. Ed. Melinda Boyd (New York: Routledge, 2010) 252–313.
- Price, Jerry "Music Reviews." *The Clarinet* 15, no. 2 (February-March): 61, 1988.
- Phillips, Robert. "Music Reviews." *The Clarinet* 13, no. 4 (Summer): 46, 1986.

Reeves, Jennifer A. "Original Clarinet Quartet Works of Mike Curtis and Josh Spaulding: An Analysis and Performance Guide." DMA diss., The University of Nebraska - Lincoln, 2017. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Sadie, Julie Anne, and Rhian Samuel. *The Norton/Grove Dictionary of Women Composers*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1995.

Sprout, Leslie A. "Music for a "new Era": Composers and National Identity in France, 1936–1946." PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2000. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

The University of Texas at Austin. "University Interscholastic League: Prescribed Music List." Accessed November 14, 2019. <https://www.uiltexas.org/music/pml>.

### Scores

Desportes, Yvonne. *Ceux du village: 10 quatuors pour clarinette si bémol*. Paris: Gérard Billaudot, 1980.

Desportes, Yvonne. *French Suite: for four B b clarinets*. San Antonio: Southern Music Company, 1967.

Desportes, Yvonne. *Les saisons: pour 4 clarinettes si b*. Paris: Gérard Billaudot, 1986.

Desportes, Yvonne. *Normandie: suite on ancient airs from Normandy : for four B b clarinets*. San Antonio: Southern Music Company, 1958.

Desportes, Yvonne. *Suite Italienne*. San Antonio: Southern Music Company, 1986.

Desportes, Yvonne, and Guy Lacour. *5 petites pièces pour 4 trompettes ou 4 clarinettes degré élémentaire - moyen*. Paris: Billaudot, 1987.

### Discography

Hite, David. *Capital University Clarinet Quartet*. Coronet, 1960. LP

Thurston Clarinet Quartet. *Clarinet Masquerade*. ASV, 1993. CD

The Flute Quartet. *Suite Italienne*. Cryston, 2005. CD

### Appendix

Email sent to Southern Music Company and Gérard Billaudot on November 13, 2019:



Katie Rice &lt;katiericeclarinet@gmail.com&gt;

---

## Dissertation

1 message

---

**Katie Rice** <katiericeclarinet@gmail.com>

Wed, Nov 13, 2019 at 5:49 PM

To: copyright@billaudot.com

To whom it may concern:

My name is Katie Rice, and I am a doctoral student at the University of North Texas, U.S.A. I would like to ask for permission to use excerpts from several movement from a single piece in my dissertation. If there is any helpful information about reprinting for a dissertation, (as this is my first time) it would be greatly appreciated. Currently, I have not narrowed the specific excerpts, but I can give you the following information:

**Title of dissertation:** The Overlooked *Prix de Rome Musicienne*: Discovering Pedagogical Wealth in the Clarinet Quartet Music of Yvonne Desportes

**Title of piece & composer:**

Les saisons by Yvonne Desportes

- short excerpts from three movements will be used in the dissertation. The specific excerpts have yet to be determined.

Thank you so much for your time!

~Katie Rice



Katie Rice &lt;katiericeclarinet@gmail.com&gt;

---

## Dissertation copyright

1 message

---

**Katie Rice** <katiericeclarinet@gmail.com>  
To: copyright@keisersouthernmusic.com

Thu, Nov 14, 2019 at 1:15 PM

To whom it may concern:

My name is Katie Rice and I am a doctoral student at the University of North Texas. I would like to ask permission to use excerpts from two pieces in my dissertation. If there is any helpful information about copyrights for a dissertation, (as this is my first time) it would be greatly appreciated. Currently, I have not narrowed the specific excerpts, but I can give you the following information:

Title of dissertation:

The Overlooked *Prix de Rome Musicienne*: Discovering Pedagogical Wealth in the Clarinet Quartet Music of Yvonne Desportes

Pieces to be used in the dissertation:

1. French Suite by Yvonne Desportes

- short excerpts from three movements will be used in the dissertation. The specific excerpts have yet to be determined.

2. Suite Italienne by Yvonne Desportes

- short excerpts from three movements will be used in the dissertation. The specific excerpts have yet to be determined.

Thank you so much for your time!  
~Katie Rice