

*Suite for Violin, Clarinet, and Piano, Op. 157b (1936)*

**Darius Milhaud**

*Ouverture*

*Divertissement*

*Jeu*

*Introduction et Final*

The *Suite for Violin, Clarinet and Piano* is a gay and witty work. It uses materials from Milhaud's *Incidental Music* to Jean Anouilh's play *Le Voyageur sans bagages*, Anouilh's first genuinely successful play. The brisk *Ouverture* with its rumba rhythm shows the influence that popular Brazilian music had on the composer. The second movement is utterly simple with melodies of folk, even nursery rhyme, character. The scherzo-like third movement omits the piano, while the last movement, following a serious but short-lived introduction, is an easy-going dance.

Darius Milhaud (1892-1974), French composer and teacher, was born in Aix-en-Provence, France. He studied at the Paris Conservatory and was stimulated by the music of Debussy and Mussorgsky, whereas he disliked that of Wagner and Brahms. Schoenberg, whom he admired greatly, was a friend of many years' standing. In 1916, Paul Claudel, then better known as a diplomat than a poet, was appointed French minister to Brazil, and invited Milhaud to accompany him to Rio de Janeiro as his secretary. The atmosphere and native music made an indelible impression on the young composer. When he returned to Paris he became one of the group of young musicians known as *Les Six*, a title invented by the music critic Henri Collet. (The other five were Auric, Durey, Honegger, Poulenc and Tailleferre). *Les Six* shared a desire for simplicity and freedom and a fondness for jazz, but otherwise they had different aims and drifted apart.

Milhaud became one of the best and most prolific composers of his generation. His vast output of four hundred forty-four opus numbers includes twelve symphonies, eighteen string quartets, thirty-four concerti, fifteen operas, nineteen ballets, twenty-five film scores, chamber and instrumental music, and many songs. His music is notable not only for its extent, but also for the freedom with which he adopted whatever style seemed to him to be suitable for the task on hand. There are few pieces that do not contain something of value. "I have no aesthetic rules, or philosophy or theories," he said. "I love to write music. I always do it with pleasure; otherwise I just do not write it. I have always made it my business to accept musical jobs of every kind." Among his best known works are the jazz-influenced *La creation du monde* and the *Scaramouche Suite* for two pianos.