

*Suite Francaise: 17<sup>th</sup> Century Airs and Dances* (2004)

Jean-Jacques Werner

“Since no music from early French music was written for the violin-clarinet-piano combination of instruments, I suggested to Jean-Jacques the idea of taking melodies from earlier French music—16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, or 18<sup>th</sup> century works—and writing a *Fantasy* on them. I thought since he knew us so well and was an excellent composer, he might find adapting this music for a modern ensemble an interesting project. He readily agreed and soon sent us this lovely piece. He decided to use melodies and pieces that were not particularly well-known ones except for the last movement which is the familiar, standard violin work from Jean-Marie Leclair’s famous violin sonata.”

—Walter Verdehr

The world premiere of *Suite Francaise* was on July 2, 2010 at Stewart Shell, Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp, Blue Lake, Michigan.

Jean-Jacques Werner (1935–2017) was well-known as both a composer and a conductor. A native of Strasbourg (Bas-Rhin), France, Werner studied at the Conservatoire de Strasbourg where he won first prizes in harp, horn, and orchestral conducting. He completed his higher education at the Schola Cantorum in Paris where he worked with Léon Barzin, Daniel Lesur, Pierre Wissmer.

As a conductor, Werner strove to feature the works of present-day composers. He began his career at the French Radio where he conducted the regional radio orchestras (Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française, Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France). He also conducted major national orchestras including the Orchestra National de France. In 1970, he founded the Ensemble Instrumental du Val de Marne, a group of renowned soloists for which eminent composers wrote works. From 1976–1989, he was the director of the Europäische Musikschul Union Orchestra. In 1981, he founded the Jeune Philharmonie du Val de Marne which took the name of Orchestre Léon Barzin in 1994. As permanent conductor and artistic director, he appeared in concert with this orchestra all over Europe and in broadcasts, festivals, and on CDs.

Werner taught conducting from 1978–1982 at the Reims Conservatoire and was a guest professor at the Paris Conservatoire. He was also the director of the Conservatoire de Fresnes (south of Paris) which became the École Nationale de Musique in 1985.

From 1982, Werner received numerous invitations to conduct and teach abroad, particularly in Taiwan and the United States. He was awarded one of the SACEM Prix de Printemps and the Pierre and Germaine Labolfe Prize in 2008; the following year he was named Officier des Arts et Lettres. Werner died in Barr (Bas-Rhin), France.

“Jean-Jacques Werner’s biculturalism, resulting from his Alsatian origin as and supported by his music training first in Strasbourg and then in Paris, became enriched in the course of his active professional development as an instrumentalist, conductor, and creator. For him, music is inscribed in the domain of humanism, which his spirituality, his love of literature, and his complicity with the poets nourish. These latter generate cantatas and lyrical works. They also engender a contemplation of which all his instrumental scores bear the mark: the movements of the soul—its impulses, desires or disruption—are felt within them. The cries of the self, its anxieties or its groans, are translated into a vigorous language, colored with incisive strokes and persuasive flights of fancy. His catalog’s diversity gives an account of the emotions of humankind, its opulence of the ambitions of artisan.” (Pierrett Germain in the catalog *Éditions Delatour*.)