Part II Examples of program notes for a full concert

Here are samples of program notes of complete concerts that I've written, providing examples of the approach I've noted in Part I. A brief comment precedes each one. First, the examples will be those written for concerts of the Danbury Symphony Orchestra, then for groups presented by the Danbury Concert Association.

Program Notes of Concerts by the Danbury Symphony Orchestra (DSO)

The Danbury Symphony Orchestra is typical of a community orchestra that arose out of the desires of amateur musicians who simply wanted to perform great music. It began in the early 1930s as the Danbury Community Orchestra, evolving in both quantity and quality of musicians as the Danbury environs grew and the Danbury State College (now Western Connecticut State University) built its music department, which would help provide future orchestra members. Perhaps the spirit of Charles Ives, Danbury's own famed American composer "son," born and raised in the town, had inspired the orchestra musicians from the beginning. And by 1999, the orchestra had risen to the challenge of presenting one of Ives' symphonies.

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DSO Sample 1: "A Concert of American Music" April 11, 1999

Comment: Thematic concerts make it easier to start with a prologue. The use of quotations occur throughout, particularly important in the Sousa segment, where the "March King" speaks of being inspired with the great "tune" of "Stars and Stripes Forever."

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Charles Ives (1874-1954) ***Symphony #2***
George Gershwin (1898-1937) ***An American in Paris***
John Philip Sousa (1854-1932) ***Stars and Stripes Forever***

"The qualities that make music identifiably American are to a large degree, if not basically, in the ear of the beholder. When enough beholders perceive the product to be indigenous, then so it becomes." William Schuman

Today's concert provides samples from three of America's greatest composers -- each of whom can truly be said to exude the American spirit into "the ear of the beholder": Charles Ives -- whose amalgamation of American tunes proved unique; George Gershwin --who conquered the popular song field and provided symphonic treasures; John Philip Sousa --- whose marches are blood-stirring in any living human. All three composers had formal training in music, but from such different youthful worlds: the big-town (Gershwin and New York), the small-town (Ives and Danbury), the differing traditions (Gershwin and the Jewish tradition; Sousa and the Portuguese and German traditions of his parents; Ives and Yankee traditions.) Here then is American music -- from the melting-pot of its people.

CHARLES IVES ` SYMPHONY #2

Some events especially define an American soul. Such an event was the Chicago Columbian Exhibition of 1893. A year-late in celebrating the 400th anniversary of Columbus's discovery, it nonetheless attracted over 27,000,000 visitors at a time when the entire US population was some 65,000,000. Its Midway (the word was spawned there) guaranteed musical delights from John Philip Sousa's band to the belly dancing of Little Egypt. Ragtime pianists presented their wares so forcefully that it propelled ragtime into a national craze. Electricity illuminated as never before; the White City of the Exhibition on Lake Michigan exulted in the energy of America. Charles Ives, then a young man of eighteen from Danbury, accompanied by his uncle, spent a week at the Exposition absorbing the sights and sounds of America. These memories, and those of his Danbury world, he would store

and musically re-open at Yale. There, guided by the composer Horatio Parker, Ives would find the way to weave into the formal structures of European serious music the fibers of the music of America, a mélange not unlike the Midway of Chicago's Columbian Exhibition.

Ives had been taught early and forcefully by his father George Ives, a bandmaster in Danbury, and a veteran musician of the Civil War. Young Charles absorbed the music of Danbury in parades, churches, and revival meetings. Trips to New York for classical orchestra concerts were treats by his father. Ives' First Symphony, written during his Yale years, clearly articulated the formal structures taught by his teacher, Horatio Parker. In the Second Symphony, Ives came into his own, merging the European structure with the melodic voice of America. Ives had great admiration for the melodies of Stephen Foster, for the hymn-tunes of his Yankee life, and for the patriotic melodies of his beloved country. All of these became the warp and woof of his symphony while acknowledging and utilizing snippets from Brahms, Beethoven and other 19th Century European masters. Ives' Second Symphony today could be given the sub-title "The AARP Symphony" for it certainly takes the older generation to recognize the numerous melodies and/or their paraphrases such as *Long, Long Ago* and Foster's *Massa's in the Cold, Cold, Ground*.

The five-movement symphony was completed in 1902 but never played *in toto* until 1951 when Leonard Bernstein led a radio broadcast performance. Jan Swafford in his book *Charles Ives* notes that the 77 year old Ives, who had never heard a complete performance of any of his symphonies, was at his Redding home (Harmony, his wife, had gone to Carnegie Hall to be present at the concert) and "was dragged next door to the Ryders' to hear the broadcast…As the cheers broke out at the end, everybody in the room looked his way. Ives got up, spat in the fireplace, and walked into the kitchen without a word."

For those who believe Ives to be hard to listen to, the Second Symphony is a revelation. **The first movement,** essentially a serenade for strings, softly brings the nostalgic world of 19th century America to the ear with an Ives theme that is immediately counterpointed in the lower strings with a portion of Foster's *Massa's in the Cold, Cold Ground*. Other melodies are recalled in a gentle way that leads directly to **the second movement**'s sprightly beginning using *Wake, Nicodemus*, a hymn-like song of the Civil War ("Nicodemus, the slave, was of African birth, and was bought for a bagfull of gold."); following is the martial *Bringing in the Sheaves*, then contrasted by the popular college tune*, Where, Oh Where, Are the Verdant Freshmen*, played softly and warmly as a reflection on his Yale years. There are repeats of the three in unique Ives intermingling, but suddenly everywhere one hears the tattoo of three notes (a paraphrasing of the opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony?) and the movement ends in a splash of orchestral color. **The lyrical third movement** commences with melody from the hymn *Beulah Land* ("I look away across the sea, where mansions are prepared for me.") Here the listener will be challenged to hear *America the Beautiful* and many paraphrases of *Massa's In the Cold, Cold Ground*. **The brief (some three minutes) fourth movement** reviews the themes of the first movement and moves into **the ebullient fifth movement** with emphasis on Foster's *De Camptown Races* and the fiddler's delight*, Turkey in the Straw* (always on a second level of counterpoint). A beautiful interlude for cello reflects again on Foster-like tunes. Finally, the sounding of *Reveille* leads to a concluding bombastic version of *Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean* and that massive final sour chord. Ives has the last laugh!

GEORGE GERSHWIN AN AMERICAN IN PARIS.

By 1928, George Gershwin was internationally famous. His *Rhapsody in Blue* had ignited the New York scene in 1924 and the *Concerto in F*, premiered in 1925, had beautifully fused the concerto form to the blues/jazz age. He had already composed the songs for thirteen Broadway musicals, including such standards as "Strike Up the Band" and "Fascinating Rhythm." Most serious music critics still would not give Gershwin his due. They resisted the incursion of *le jazz hot* into their world. However one famous composer didn't agree with the critics. That was Maurice Ravel. He visited New York in March, 1928, and requested a meeting with Gershwin. When they met, Gershwin surprised Ravel by asking if he might study with him. Ravel refused saying that it wasn't a good idea because "it would probably cause (Gershwin) to write bad 'Ravel' and lose his great gift of melody and spontaneity." A few days later, to take a break from the intense musical scene, George and his brother Ira (his lyricist for most songs) sailed to Europe for three months with much time in Paris. There George began *An American in Paris*, a composition to further convince the public and his music critics of his orchestral talents. To bring the true Parisian flavor back home, he packed in his luggage several real Paris taxi horns, the sounds of which would uniquely color the world premiere.

Gershwin completed the composition on his return to New York. Then he called his friend Deems Taylor and invited him to look over the manuscript with him and write the program note for the premiere on December 13, 1928 in Carnegie Hall. Here (with only a few omissions) are those Taylor notes for *An American in Paris*.

You are to imagine an American, visiting Paris, swinging down the Champs-Elysee on a mild, sunny morning in May or June. He is off at full speed at once, to the tune of the First Walking Theme, a straightforward diatonic air, designed to convey an impression of Gallic freedom and gaiety. Our American's ears being open, as well as his eyes, he notes with pleasure the sounds of the city. French taxi-cabs seem to amuse him particularly…Having safely eluded the taxis, our American apparently passes at the open door of a café where, if one is to believe the trombones, La Maxixe is still popular. Exhilarated by this reminder of the gay 1900s, he resumes his stroll through the medium of the Second Walking Theme, which is announced by the clarinet in French with a strong American accent. Both themes are now discussed at some length by the instruments, until our tourist happens to pass something…and as revealed by the English horn, our hero slackens his pace until he is safely past…When the Third Walking Theme makes its eventual appearance...it is distinctly less Gallic than its predecessors...And now the orchestra introduces an unhallowed episode. Suffice it to say that a solo violin approaches our hero and addresses him in the most charming broken English; and his response being inaudible--or at least unintelligible--repeats the remark. The one-sided conversation continues for some time...Our hero becomes homesick. He has the blues…Just in the nick of time, the compassionate orchestra rushes another theme to the rescue, two trumpets performing the ceremony of introduction. It is apparent that our hero must have met a compatriot; for this last theme is a noisy, cheerful, self-confident Charleston without a drop of Gallic blood in its veins…Paris isn't such a bad place, after all; as a matter of fact, it's a grand place! Nice weather, nothing to do till tomorrow. The blues return, but mitigated by the Second Walking Theme--a happy reminiscence rather than a homesick yearning--and the orchestra in a riotous finale, decides to make a night of it. It will be great to get home; but meanwhile, this is Paris!

(With the kind permission of Joan Kennedy Taylor, Deems Taylor's daughter.)

JOHN PHILIP SOUSA STARS AND STRIPES FOREVER.

There is the apocryphal story that Sousa's family name was really "So" and to show his great love for the USA, John Philip added those three letters to his name. No, Sousa was Sousa. His father was an immigrant from Portugal, his mother Bavarian-born. His father became a musician in the U.S. Navy and recognized his son's talents, so young Sousa studied music and the violin from an early age. In 1868 (only fourteen years old) Sousa signed on as an apprentice with the Marine Band and remained with the Marine Band, first as musician, then conductor, until 1891. In that year he formed the Sousa Band, a band that influenced programming and music in its yearly coast-to-coast tours. The European tours introduced American music to many.

In November 1896, Sousa was vacationing in Europe when he learned of the death of his band's manager. He sailed home on the next ship. In a particularly reflective mood during that voyage, he felt the stirrings that would translate into what is probably the most famous march ever written. How this came about, Sousa explained in his autobiography *Marching Along*:

As the vessel steamed out the harbor I was pacing the deck, absorbed in thoughts of my manager's death and the many duties and decisions which awaited me in New York. Suddenly, I began to sense the rhythmic beat of a band playing within my brain. It kept on ceaseless, playing, playing, playing. Throughout the whole tense voyage, that imaginary band continued to unfold the same themes, echoing and re-echoing the most distinct melody. I did not transfer a note of that music to paper while I was on the steamer, but when we reached shore, I set down the measures that my brain band had been playing for me, and not a note of it has ever changed.

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DSO SAMPLE 2: "Mendelssohn and Brahms" April 8, 1990

Comment: Often a non-thematic concert will feature works by two or three composers. In a prologue, the writer can introduce the reader to the composers, establishing similarities, differences, and where they fit in the "big picture" of classical music. This was one of the earliest concerts I wrote notes for and hadn't yet opened up the verbal doors widely as happened in Sample 1, written 9 years later.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) The Hebrides Overture ("Fingal's Cave"), Op. 26
Symphony No. 3 ("Scottish"), Op. 56
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) Concerto in B flat major for piano and orchestra, Op. 83

Mendelssohn and Brahms anchor the beginning and end of 19th century German romanticism. Mendelssohn was from a wealthy and well-established German family; Brahms was from a very poor and hardly sophisticated parentage. But musical genius comes from all backgrounds, and there are some interesting parallels in the musical output of these two. In their mature years they both wrote two piano concertos, one violin concerto, and four symphonies. However, Mendelssohn, while still a teenager , wrote at least a dozen modest "string symphonies." Neither wrote operas, but both wrote effective choral works, songs, piano and chamber music. Brahms was a perfectionist; he didn't complete his first symphony until he was 43 years old. (Mendelssohn's famed "Italian Symphony" had been written at age 24.) Where Brahms's music more often had lush, thick texture, Mendelssohn had a spontaneity, clarity and lilt to his music that seemed never to be denied.
They both loved to travel from their native Germany, Mendelssohn making ten trips to England alone, where he was adored by the British. Brahms loved Italy and a visit there during the composition of his second piano concerto most assuredly helped suffuse this work with unusual warmth and spirit. It also was the time when Brahms grew his famed beard. The reason? "With a smooth chin," Brahms joked, "one is taken for either an actor or a priest." Mendelssohn, who was more prone to "program music," in one visit to Scotland was inoculated with the germ for the two "Scottish" compositions on today's program.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)The Hebrides Overture ("Fingal's Cave"), Op. 26
"Overture to a Lonely Island" was Mendelssohn's original name for this overture. The initial theme was born at the very time he visited the Hebrides islands in 1829 and he jotted it down in a letter home during the visit. The overture begins with an immediate sense of the rolling waves, with wisps of theme tossed about in the orchestra, and only in the middle of the piece does a full-blown lyrical theme emerge. (Parts of this Overture were favorites for transition passages in the radio program of "The Lone Ranger.") It ends with a suddenly dispelled storm and utter calm.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) Symphony No. 3 ("Scottish"), Op. 56
Ten years would pass after Mendelssohn's visit to Scotland before he completed his Third Symphony. What, you might ask, makes this music even suggestive of Scotland? Mendelssohn did not collect folk songs (as some composers), then introduce them into his compositions, so that isn't it. Perhaps it is simply the dark "northern" quality of so much of the music, a comparison to the brightness of his earlier "Italian" symphony. The first movement begins and ends with the same meditative quality, and in between the principal theme creates a mood of conflict, the depiction of the swirling of wind and rain clearly stated toward the end of the movement. In the second movement (which flows without pause from the first), a clarinet dances above the strings in a typical Mendelssohnian scherzo. There is darting of strings and woodwinds, with all ultimately joining in an orchestral *tutti,* then musical layers are peeled off until the movement ends simply, pianissimo and pizzicato. The third movement is initiated with a reflective theme that is ultimately contrasted with an emphatic, almost funeral, march, the two theme tussle, but the initial them and calm win out. The final movement opens in a decisive, powerful manner which carries through to the memorable final theme, often likened to the march of the Scottish clans in a triumphal procession.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) Concerto in B flat major for piano and orchestra, Op. 83
Few piano concertos place the two partners (orchestra and piano) on such equal basis as Brahms's second piano concerto. In four movements, not the traditional three, this is one of the longest in the piano repertoire. The first movement commences with a bucolic-sounding theme sounded by the horn with a gentle response by the piano. Within a few minutes both the piano and orchestra have transposed this theme into a regal (played at forte level) experience. The contrast of orchestra and piano, of serenity and nobility, pervades this long movement. The agitated beginning of the second movement is contrasted with a "trio" segment which gives a sense of carillon bells, yet with a swaying motion that might even suggest a beer hall atmosphere. With the third movement a sense of great calm is provided, a necessary pause as a reflection on what has been and what is yet to come. In the fourth movement no less than six themes are introduced, a time of spirit, joy and spontaneity (some say it has a gypsy

flavor, but perhaps it is really Italianate). No matter, for this movement is a fine example of the reason why so much of Brahms is felt to be episodic, yet always uplifting.

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Sample 3: "All-Prokofiev Concert" November 5, 1995

Comment: A concert featuring the music of only one composer provides a special opportunity to bring a composer to life in the introduction. Then when it is one of the great European composers who have come to the United States as part of their musical development , who could ask for anything more?

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Serge Prokofiev (1891-1953) ***Love of Three Oranges: March and Scherzo, Opus 33b.***
Lieutenant Kije Suite, Opus 60
Symphony No. 5, Opus 100.

"He had white-blond hair, a small head with a large mouth and very thick lips...and very long, awkwardly dangling arms, terminating in a bruiser's powerful hands." So begins a description of 25-year old Serge Prokofiev as he played a concert in Kiev in 1916. Two years earlier he had graduated from the St. Petersburg Conservatory winning the "battle of the pianos"--five of the best piano students each playing a "classic" piano concerto of their choosing. Prokofiev's choice? His own piano concerto! Nothing immodest about this young man. He would leave Russia in 1918 by train across Siberia, then by ship to the United States beginning decades (1918-1934) of fame outside of Mother Russia living many years in Paris while earning a living by concertizing throughout Europe and the United States. In 1935, after several forays into Russia and finding he would be accepted back gladly, he returned to his homeland and his Soviet years (1935-1953). Though he had been particularly criticized in earlier years by New York critics, he would come to learn that an even more severe critic awaited him back home: Joseph Stalin himself and his frequent ideological attacks on Russian composers. But the "great leveler" had the last word. Prokofiev would die on March 5, 1953, one hour before Stalin. A quartet of string players would move from his bier to that of the great dictator serenading them in death with the same apolitical Russian music, the second movement of Tchaikovsky's Second String Quartet.

What and how did Prokofiev come to write his music? His mother, a pianist and musician, strongly influenced young Sergei. She hired Reinhold Gliere (he would later gain fame as a composer also) for two summers to come to their home and teach the talented 11-year old. Years later at the Conservatory, his teachers would be both Alexander Glazounov and Anatole Liadov. The turbulent piano music Prokofiev wrote in these years seems at odds with his first symphony, the "Classical Symphony," also composed during those Russian years. Prokofiev himself in an article in 1941 suggested the answer to this paradox. He identified five principal elements which dominated his music: 1) the classical element; 2) innovation (prevalent in his "iron and steel" early years); 3) the toccata or "motor" element (pulsating rhythmic patterns); 4) the lyric element (to become prominent in his Soviet years of composition); 5) the element of jest and mockery (certainly part of Love of Three Oranges and Lieutenant Kije.)

In the 1920s, his years outside Russia, Prokofiev thrived on the exceptional artistic creative forces at work in Paris. For Russians named Sergei who had found fame and fortune in France, most chose to lose their "i" and become Serge, thus "frenchified." This applied also to two other important Russians he had known in Russia and who had preceded him to Paris and would assist his ascendency on the world stage: Serge Diaghilev and Serge Koussevitsky. Diaghilev, the great impresario who presented Igor Stravinsky's Firebird and Rite of Spring, commissioned several ballets from the talented Prokofiev, with the most successful being Prodigal Son in 1927. Diaghilev would later refer to Stravinsky and Prokofiev, his fellow Russians, as his "first and second sons" respectively. Koussevitsky, a double bass player of the first rank, had fortunately married into wealth that provided opportunity for developing his

conducting skills as well as initiating a publishing house. He sought to support new music, publishing many of young Prokofiev's early compositions. When Koussevitsky became conductor of the Boston Symphony in 1924, he championed Prokofiev in the United States as he had in Europe.

No brief overview of Prokofiev's life can leave out another Sergei, the great Russian motion-picture director Sergei Eisenstein. When Prokofiev commenced his Soviet years he was sought by Eisenstein to provide music for a film he would be directing since Prokofiev had had great success before with the music for Lieutenant Kije. The resulting cohesion of talents produced one of the great exemplars of the combination of visual impact and music in cinema history, Alexander Nevsky. Eisenstein showed special insight into Prokofiev and his music. "Prokofiev's music," Eisenstein wrote, "is intrinsically Russian in its firm adherence to tradition that can be traced back to the primitive Scythians and the inimitable chiseled beauty of 13th-century stone carvings...Prokofiev's art turns for inspiration to the emergence of the Russian people's national consciousness ....This explains why the past comes so vividly to life in Prokofiev's music, not by means of archaisms and stylization, but via bold, daring patterns of ultra-modern musical style...All his work is free from impressionistic generalizations, approximating smears and blurred patches of color. In Prokofiev's work it is not an arbitrary paint brush but the unrelenting lens which he holds before us..."

Love of Three Oranges, March and Scherzo. Opus 33b

Cyrus H. McCormick, son of the inventor of the grain reaper, went to Russia in 1917 soon after the Revolution as part of the the U.S. commission sent by President Woodrow Wilson to determine if the Russian army would continue fighting in the World War or withdraw. McCormick chanced to meet Prokofiev, was impressed, and told the young musical genius: "If you're ever in Chicago, look me up." Well, who should appear in the Windy City a year later but the young émigré? McCormick made the appropriate introductions and by January 1919 Prokofiev (who had already some operatic success in Russia) signed a contract with Chicago Opera to write an opera based on the Italian commedia dell'arte theater-piece "The Love of Three Oranges." Harlow Robinson, in his fine biography Sergei Prokofiev, notes: "By March, citrus growers in Florida and California were competing vigorously for promotion rights." Apparently they hadn't read the libretto for each of the oranges had a woman inside! The story, about a prince who can't laugh, had been known to Prokofiev for several years. He wrote the libretto himself developing an opera without arias, but with lots of action of acrobats, clowns, and a variety of nasty individuals including a witch, Fata Morgana. It is Morgana's accidental fall that finally makes the prince laugh. For that unappreciated reaction, the witch curses the prince to a quest to find three oranges which he will love and finally cut open to find real women. Though the witch's magic will cause the first two women to die in front of the prince, her magic is finally turned against her, and the prince saves and loves the last "orange" woman. The opera relies strongly on characterization and action for its impact, not on lyricism. The "March" from the opera has become one of Prokofiev's most famous single compositions. Played several times in the opera, it initially accompanies the Prince's journey to a land where he hopes to find laughter. (In 1944, the radio program "The FBI in Peace and War" chose the "March" for its theme. Not too much laughter found there.) The Scherzo is an orchestral interlude relating to the activities of the witch.

Lieutenant Kije Suite, Opus 60
1) Birth of Kije 2) Romance 3) Kije's Wedding 4) Troika 5) Burial of Kije

For Prokofiev, writing the film music for the Soviet film Lieutenant Kije in 1933 provided the transition from his Parisian years back to his homeland. The plot is a satiric jab at the Czarist years. Through a mistake in spelling, a nonexistent lieutenant is added to the Czar's ranks. The strange name of Kije on the list catches the Czar's attention and he wants to know more of this Lieutenant Kije. From then on bureaucrats scramble to stay one step ahead of the Czar in giving life to an imaginary soldier for fear of having their names added to the Czar's list of bureaucrats heading for Siberia. The Lieutenant Kije Suite, prepared by Prokofiev in 1934, brought him great success. The five

part Suite begins with the "Birth of Kije", the birth announced in appropriate military manner with trumpet, fife and drum. In the following "Romance", a tenor saxophone replaces the human voice which in the film sings about the loss of a companion: "My gray dove is full of sorrow, she moans day and night for her dear companion..." Prokofiev's musical notation for "Kije's Wedding" is "allegro fastoso," joyful with pomp and magnificence. The orchestration is particularly sumptuous with trumpet and full orchestra alternating with wedding dance folk-tunes. In "Troika," the sound of bells and strings plucked in a balalaika-like imitation provide the Russian flavor for an old Russian tavern ditty (sung in the movie) that comments on the vicissitudes of loving a woman. For "Burial of Kije," Prokofiev sends Kije to his reward on the back of some of his favorite tunes. Kije finally recedes into the other world the same as he arrived, to the sound of a distant trumpet.

Symphony No. 5, Opus 100 I. Andante II. Allegro marcato III. Adagio IV. Allegro giocoso

Young Prokofiev hit symphonic pay dirt in his first try in 1918. In the "Classical Symphony" three of his compositional elements fit perfectly: classical form, lyricism, and a sense of jest. Seven years later with his Second Symphony, he hit a stone wall of negativity among audiences. He had gone too far with a lengthy first movement, unending in intensity and harshness. His Third Symphony (1928) and Fourth Symphony (1930) were based on recycled musical materials from previous compositions. For fifteen years after 1930 Prokofiev concentrated on ballet scores, film music and solo compositions. Unexpectedly, Prokofiev returned to the symphonic form in 1945 with Symphony No. 5. Reaction was universally positive, first in Russia where Prokofiev conducted the initial performance, then in the U.S. premiere by Koussevitsky in Boston on November 9, 1945. It remains the last 20th century symphony to have found a permanent home in the orchestral repertoire.

Prokofiev, in an interview published in The New York Times on March 25, 1945 commented that during the first years of WWII he did his part in composing marches and other patriotic music, then "Finally, I wrote my Fifth symphony, on which I had been working for several years, gathering themes for it in a special notebook...It is a symphony about the spirit of man." Prokofiev insisted it was pure music and without program.

The first movement is in sonata form with two lengthy lyrical themes. A short skittish motif in the strings is introduced to accentuate the melodic lines. Trumpet punctuations and a variety of strong bass underpinnings leads to the coda.

The second movement starts with a strong "motor" force, scherzo-like, then a contrasting central trio section, with the mood of a lullaby. The return to the original theme occurs with a sense of a giant orchestral engine starting-up. Once again Prokofiev's "motor" element is at work to bring the movement to an end.

If there are musical equivalents to the pains of war, they will be heard in the third movement. A subtle martial quality (some find it funereal) pervades the movement with a sense of sadness. Toward the end a shrill orchestral outburst of anxiety and fear provides a jarring interruption.

Prokofiev begins the final movement with brief recap of the first movement's principal theme. Then in quickstep rhythm, a clarinet exalts a perky theme with Prokofievian touches of orchestral humor. The underpinning is again one of inexorable forward movement. Woodwinds play against the strings until orchestra, in full rhythmic (hear those wood-blocks?) and tonal array, charges down the final measures to a whip-snapping conclusion.

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DSO Sample 4: 60th Anniversary of the Danbury Music Centre June 1, 1996

Comment: In 1935, Donald Tweedy, a Danbury music lover, musician and educator, formed **a** community group of music lovers to sponsor orchestras and choruses. Named the Danbury Music Centre, it would become the sponsor

of three principal community music-makers: the Danbury Symphony Orchestra, the Danbury Community Orchestra (a youth group), and the Danbury Concert Chorus. When Tweedy died in 1948, his will provided a means for the Centre to gain funds annually for its mission of community music.

All three musical groups participated in the 60th anniversary concert which for a finale, called upon the DSO, the Chorus and professional vocalists to bring Beethoven's Ninth, the Choral Symphony, to life in Danbury for one evening. How I ever came up with the idea for the notes on Beethoven's Ninth, I don't know.

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Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) **Overture to Egmont**
Morton Gould (1913-1996) **American Salute**
Charles Ives (1874-1954) **The Unanswered Question**
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) **Concerto for Two Violins in D Minor, BWV 1041**
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) **Symphony in D Minor, No. 9, Op. 125**

Today's program focuses on the great Beethoven Ninth Symphony as the centerpiece of celebration. However, the four compositions also heard provide an intriguing sampling of great music over three centuries, from Bach to "local boys" Charles Ives (Danbury native) and Morton Gould (New York City native). Though all five compositions on the program could be considered "absolute" music (no attempt to tell a story or describe a location), a fascinating concept underlies four of the five compositions -- the meaning of life and its conflicts. Beethoven chose the poem by Frederich Schiller "An die Freude" ("Ode to Joy") as the choral portion of his last symphony to positively reflect on life's purpose. Charles Ives also contemplated life's meaning in The Unanswered Question, but for him there were more questions than answers. Probably the key basis for a suspicion that earth can never be heaven is the reality of war. World War II inspired Morton Gould to help get American blood boiling by writing American Salute based on the great Civil War song "When Johnny Comes Marching Home." Beethoven in the Overture to Egmont reflected on heroism in a 16th century war between the Dutch and the Spanish. So the music, in today's program does have a basis in the deepest concerns of people. The results will once again remind us that music, the art that primes the emotions most, in its greatest compositions is for all ages.

Overture to Egmont Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
Danbury Community Orchestra, Richard Brooks, conductor
This overture is one of nine musical numbers Beethoven composed for the Vienna theater in 1810 to augment the production of the play Egmont by Goethe. Here we have Beethoven fourteen years before the Ninth Symphony, providing another musical example of how people can become free of oppression, a theme that he espoused from the time of the Eroica Symphony. In the Goethe play, Colonel Egmont of the Netherlands becomes a martyr in the eyes of the people of the Low countries in their battle with the Spaniards. (Remember that Beethoven's father was from the Netherlands). As in so many of his compositions, Beethoven begins with a full orchestral chord (to get your attention), then immediately provides a theme of somber concept followed by active and vital music that leads to the "Triumph Symphony," the very final exultant statement where bells (the horns) peal and that Lilliputian instrument, the piccolo, rises above the full orchestra.

American Salute Morton Gould (1913-1996)
Danbury Community Orchestra, Richard Brooks, conductor
Morton Gould came up through the early days of radio as a music arranger and by the 1940s had his own radio programs and became famous for the "Pavane" from the Latin American Symphonette, ballets such as Interplay, four symphonies and even a concerto for Tap Dancer and Orchestra. Gould knew that music was for people and that melody was central to this appeal. So during World War II, in order to write a stirring composition, Gould chose the 1863 tune "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" for the basis of his American Salute. The variety and imagination with which he treated the "tune" has made this composition a favorite of orchestras and bands alike.

The Unanswered Question Charles Ives (1874-1954)

Musicians of both Danbury Orchestras, Stan Schmidt, trumpet

For Charles Ives, composition was for his personal pleasures. He appears to have cared less about performances of his works. After all, he did initiate a very successful insurance practice in New York City and could be a musical dilettante. How he felt about performances of his works can be sensed in his comment about his songs: “Some of the songs...cannot be sung...An excuse for their existence...is that a song has a few rights the same as other citizens...” (Only Ives, the iconoclast, could believe that music had "rights" to exist!) Ives from his years as a boy in Danbury knew well the songs and hymns of his world and he often introduced them in subtle and often contradictory/concurrent themes in his compositions, but The Unanswered Question stretches not back to childhood but forward to the silent unknown. Ives composed it in 1906 and first named the composition “A Contemplation of a Serious Matter” or “The Unanswered Perennial Question.” The work is triangular with the strings in seamless, timeless background "silence," the trumpet putting forth “The Perennial Question of Existence,” and the flutes, the “Fighting Answerers” challenging and mocking. At the conclusion, as Ives himself wrote: "The strife is over for the moment. After [the Fighting Answerers] disappear, “The Question” is asked for the last time and the “Silences” are heard beyond in “Undisturbed Solitude.”’

Concerto for Two Violins in D Minor, BWV 1041 **Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)**

DSO, Richard Brooks and Larry Deming, violinists

To the musical mind, the word “concerto” pictures a soloist in front of an orchestra and the music separated into three movements. It was the Italian Antonio Vivaldi, priest/composer and director of an orchestra of orphaned girls, that crystallized this format. Bach, familiar with Vivaldi concertos, found an opportunity to build on this structure during the time (1718-1723) when he was employed by musically-talented Prince Leopold at Cöthen in central Germany. Here Bach had some 18 musicians in his orchestra and no chapel duties to perform, so he concentrated on instrumental compositions. This violin concerto is one of only three concertos for that instrument that are known to have been written by him. In the first movement, after a full orchestra ("tutti") introduction of the jaunty theme, the two soloists are in command to show their abilities against light orchestral support. The second movement, longer than the outer movements, has the violinists in separate, then overlapping phrases, with the second violin utilizing a "gentle downward fragment that each time leads to new and more radiant vistas." The last movement echoes the first in form, but with a seemingly heavier-hearted theme.

Symphony in D Minor, No. 9, Op. 125 Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

I. Allegro, ma non troppo, un poco maestoso II. Molto vivace; presto

III. Adagio molto e cantabile IV. Presto; Allegro assai; Presto

NOTE: The following is one person's view of what an interview with Beethoven might have been like the day after the symphony was first performed in Vienna.

VIENNA, May 8, 1824. Last evening at the Kärthnerthor Theater, a group of musicians and wealthy amateurs presented the first performance of Herr Ludwig van Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The audience was exuberant in its acceptance of this symphony, the longest ever written. The choral finale brought the audience to its feet. The deaf composer had to be turned to face the audience to recognize the magnitude of his success. This reporter was able to corner Herr Beethoven later and provide written questions. He graciously (contrary to opinion that he is always brusque and sullen) agreed to an interview this morning.

Reporter: Herr Beethoven, last night you conquered Vienna again with a symphony that introduced a chorus into the final movement, something unheard of before this. Why did you choose to write such a composition?

BEETHOVEN: For years I have been fascinated by Schiller's poem "An die Freude." In his poem, I found the answer to why we are all on this planet. Brotherhood! No greater combination of emotions exist than poetry and music, so why not end my symphony with the finest of instruments, the human voice, intoning words of brotherhood while a full orchestra thunders the most beautiful sounds I am capable of writing?

Reporter: That does bring up one point that many of the amateur singers complained about to me. Their throats were sore from singing notes so high in pitch they felt they were screaming, not singing! Why such extremes?

BEETHOVEN: Well, it's true I've never been much of a singer, but I did double all their singing with instruments in the orchestra. Yes, maybe I did make them stretch their talents, but that has been always part of my life---to reach out farther than anyone else has ever done.

Reporter: Yes, you've given us examples of composing that have shaped the future of music. Certainly the very first measures of this new Symphony are most unusual. You use pianissimo mysterious chords, followed by thematic fragments that ultimately build to your first theme in an orchestral "tutti" that is overwhelming----and we aren't even a minute into the symphony. So are you giving us a picture of chaos out of which comes order?
BEETHOVEN: Are you trying to get me to tell you that there is a "program" to the symphony? That every movement has a meaning all its own? Well, I'm not going to say, but don't you find an inexorable forward-thrust throughout the movement? I've tried to dwell mainly on the first theme with quiet interludes of other musical subjects, but ultimately I have to end the movement abruptly. Call it "fate," call it "inevitability," I call it the first movement.

Reporter: The Scherzo second movement outdoes any of your previous attempts at the scherzo form, a form that you have promulgated in place of the minuet movement used by the greats like Haydn and Mozart. Usually the scherzo is the third movement, as was the minuet. Why the second movement here?
BEETHOVEN: Simple answer. Contrast. Everything is ultimately pointing to the fourth movement and my choral finale. The introduction to that last movement had to be stupendous in sound, grab people by the throat. If the Scherzo preceded it----You remember that the Scherzo ends with an orchestral "tutti" and maybe even several ruptured timpanis---How could I expect to introduce the fourth movement, and its loud beginning, and have contrast?

Reporter:O.K. Now we know why the Scherzo is the second movement. "Scherzare," the Italian verb from which the noun "Scherzo" comes from, really means "play tricks, joke around." Was that what you were doing in this movement?

BEETHOVEN: Well, what do you think? After that attention getting introduction "tutti" and the timpani pounding, the orchestra takes off in an energetic attempt at a fugal "moto perpetuo," but every so often it has to literally stop to catch its wind, and the timpani in jarring solos reminds everyone that rhythm is everything in this movement. And besides as I'm standing on the stage, I can really feel those drumbeats through the floor. Feels good.

Reporter: Well, you may not want to tell us the program of your Scherzo, but I will tell you that I see it as the essence of the positive world of vivacious living, like you see in so many Viennese. Now, tell us about that glorious adagio third movement. Why the concept of themes and variations?

BEETHOVEN: In one way, you could say that my symphony is in three parts. The first two movements (the first part) use the complete orchestral forces in a variety of ways, always with energy. The finale is its own world. In between I had to have quiet beauty and it had to have significant length, an almost hypnotic quality along the lines of the quiet pastoral nature of parts of my Sixth Symphony. I couldn't do this with only one theme, so I chose two themes and the variations bring both diversity and interest. But you will remember that I had to interrupt the quietude with several forceful orchestra outbursts. The fourth movement was near and the listeners were being told to expect something that would be worth waiting for.

Reporter: So, we do finally come to that incredible fourth movement. Why the cacophony of sound at the very beginning?

BEETHOVEN: I had found the tune that would for me be the "theme of joy." "Joy" negates all other matters, so one by one I introduced short fragments of the themes of the previous movements and had the orchestra formally reject them all knowing the "theme of joy " was just around the corner. You know, I (and most composers) believe in repeating a good thing, so when the time came to unlease the full "theme of joy", you'll remember the orchestra plays it four times just to be sure the point of its importance is made.

Reporter: What was the biggest problem you had in the fourth movement?

BEETHOVEN: Probably determining just how to introduce the vocal portion. I finally decided after the orchestra has introduced the "theme of joy", to repeat those cacophonous beginning measures, bring the orchestra to a full stop, and let the bass soloist's voice emerge alone, as if speaking for all humanity---"O, friends, no more these sounds continue...O, joy let us praise thee." But then, how to bring in the chorus? Then I thought, "Why not simply have the basses echo that first key word "Freude?"' After that I had few problems.

Reporter: Then in the middle all singing stops and you introduce a somewhat jaunty march. Why?

BEETHOVEN: Jaunty or not, marches represent musically the greatest threat to joy and that is war. How many wars have we had in the past years? How many in the future years? I utilized the same contrast in the Mass in D, the Missa Solemnis, in the last movement where the chorus is extolling "Peace" and are interrupted by a military march.

Reporter: Then after the march you bring the full chorus and orchestra to sing exultantly of joy? Why not end there? We know that you only used about one-third of Schiller's poem and even did some rearranging of text.

BEETHOVEN: If we do not believe in something greater than us, what can joy be but empty hope? For that, the chorus had to enforce that notion (yes, even stridently) that up beyond the stars dwells a loving Father. Then, I couldn't resist a fugal choral anticlimax, then quietness. The orchestra then gears up to full strength and the soloists lead the chorus to the coda, emphasizing over and over in words that can be heard the one reason I wrote this symphony---**Alle Menschen werden Brüder**!

Reporter: Thank you, Herr Beethoven.

Note: the writer acknowledges the ideas in the above fictional interview came from a variety of sources including the writings of Robert Bagar & Luigi Biancolli, Philip Hale, Deems Taylor, and Sir Donald Tovey.

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DSO Sample 5: An Evening in Vienna IV, May 8, 1999

Tonight's concert is the fourth by Maestro James Humphreville and the Danbury Symphony to honor the unique place of Vienna in music history. How appropriate that "lustig" is in several titles for "merry" indeed is the immediate human response to the music heard tonight. Yes, Beethoven, Brahms, Bruckner and Mahler also wandered the Viennese "strasse" in the 19th century, but for the joy of music that strikes straight to hearts' core, it will most often be (as in the words of Ira Gershwin) --- "By Strauss!"

Vienna in the 19th century remained the capital of the centuries-old Hapsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire, an amalgam of ethnicities that connected the western confines of the Italian Alps in Trentino to the eastern Hungarian Plains. The century would see invasions and uprisings in Vienna itself as this empire tottered to its demise in World War I. Yet through it all, Vienna carried forward a musical development second to none.

Otto Nicolai (1810-1849) Overture to *Die Lustigen Weiber von Windsor (The Merry Wives of Windsor*)

Otto Nicolai is a member of the "I'm-remembered-for-only-one-opera" Club like Engelbert Humperdinck (*Hansel and Gretel*) and Ruggiero Leoncavallo (*Pagliacci*.) He had little time to enjoy the very successful Berlin premiere of *Die Lustigen Weiber von Windsor* in 1849 for he died two months later. Born and raised in Germany, Nicolai called Vienna his home from 1837 to 1847 when he held a variety of important musical posts, including the head of the Hofopera. From members of that opera's orchestra he initiated the Philharmonic Concerts and thus created the Vienna Philharmonic. So as you rouse yourself on New Year's day and watch the Vienna Philharmonic on TV in their traditional New Year's eve concert of Viennese waltzes and polkas, thank Otto!

Few opera overtures are happier experiences than this curtain raiser to Nicolai's version of the Falstaff story. From the wonderfully atmospheric quiet beginning to the rousing conclusion, Nicolai used melodies from the third act to structure the overture. In this final act of the opera, the Mistresses Ford and Page have tricked the corpulently amorous Falstaff into an evening masquerade in Windsor Forest to receive his comeuppance. The quiet, opening measures of the overture is the music of the moonrise. The Mistresses' friends have come dressed as elves and the *vivace* melody that follows is their dance. Next is an "infectious, lilting theme" not used in the opera, but Wagner (not to let a good thing escape) stole it for *Die Meistersinger*! The overture continues with snippets of other melodies and a rousing conclusion that puts a joyful cap on a masterpiece.

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) Symphony #102 in B-Flat Major

From a composer now remembered but for one composition, we move to Joseph Haydn whose multitude of compositions rank him among the most played of all composers. Consider just his symphonies. He wrote 104 of them, most of which are still in the orchestral repertoire. From 1766-1790, Haydn was in the employ of the Esterhazy princes and their palatial world near Vienna for the purpose of supplying music for their court. His obligation was to compose--- symphonies, dances, string quartets, operas, and even incidental music for the vast repertory of spoken dramas often played at the palace. With the death in 1790 of Nicolaus Prince Esterhazy, Haydn's great patron of music, the Esterhazy connection ended. Haydn was released from the family's musical bonds only to be beguiled by the English impresario Salomon to come to England and compose for his orchestra and concerts. This Haydn did, not knowing a word of English. In the succeeding four years he concluded his symphonic output by composing twelve symphonies. The success of these so-called London symphonies, Numbers 93-104, was enormous. The English exulted in Haydn's symphonies and his conducting. (Only Numbers 93-101 were written under the sponsorship of Salomon. Not unlike today's music scene, Salomon ran out of money and another concert group sponsored the final three of Haydn's London symphonies.) Haydn returned to Vienna in 1795 as a man famous throughout Europe.

Many of these final dozen symphonies have nicknames: "Surprise" (#94), "Miracle" (#96), "Military" (#100), "Clock" (#101), "Drumroll" (#103), "London" (#104). Though Symphony #102 does not have a nickname, this writer will provide, <u>not</u> a nickname for the symphony, but one for each movement, an attempt to categorize the musical effect in each case.

I. Largo – Allegro vivace "**The Interrupted**"

The movement commences with a solemn octave B-flat by the entire orchestra. (It could actually also be a final note to a symphony!) The slow introduction is mysterious in its wanderings, but breaks out into *allegro* themes of great exuberance, often to be stopped in their tracks by the same solemn octave. At one time a dramatic roll of the kettledrums returns the orchestra to its initial joyful mode and the rush to the two chord conclusion.

II. Adagio "**The Cello"**

This movement, in its rhapsodic character, is unlike any slow movement of a Haydn symphony. A sinuous, graceful, drawn-out melody of unusual beauty is repeated several times, often with a solo cello obbligato throughout, the melody carried by strings and woodwinds. Timpani and muted horns and trumpets also provide unusual support.

III. Menuetto: Allegro "**The Stomper**"

Where delicate melody permeated the second movement, this minuet-like movement has the sense of a peasant clog-dance. The trio section provides the appropriate contrast, before the stomping returns.

IV. Finale: Presto "**Where-Am-I-Going-and-When-Will-I-Get-There**?"

A rondo finale does what the word implies – keeps going until it gets back to where it started. What is amazing about this witty finale is that the quick melodic phrases (often in the familiar Haydn ascending/descending "question/answer" form) keep you wondering when and where it is all going. Toward the end, the attempts to re-commence the themes are continually set aside, "a musical equivalent to stuttering," one critic suggests.

Johann Strauss, Jr. (1825-1899)

Yes, Schubert was Viennese and Beethoven an adopted son of Vienna, but only Johann Strauss, Jr. captured the essence of Vienna in music with his waltzes, polkas, and marches. He was born in Vienna and died there. His father had initiated the musical Strauss empire by touring an orchestra throughout Europe, playing the tunes of father and son and brother Josef. "Junior" would take over that orchestra when his father died, conducting it while standing and playing his violin while facing the adoring audiences. It's interesting to note that the two "Kings" of music, Johann Strauss, Jr. ("The Waltz King,") and John Philip Sousa, ("The March King,") both propelled their music to thousands through their own musical organization.

Kaiser-waltzer (The Emperor Waltz) op. 437

Johann Strauss wrote most of his 400 waltzes, polkas, quadrilles and marches (not to mention a dozen operettas) for specific occasions or in dedication to one of the many associations in Vienna. In 1888, on the 40th anniversary of the reign of Emperor Franz Josef, Strauss wrote this waltz in homage to the Emperor.

Unter Donner und Blitzen (Thunder and Lightning Polka) op. 324

Composed in 1868, this emphatic polka had its dedication, not to the Vienna Meteorological Society, but to the Vienna Artists Association.

Wiener Blut Waltz (Vienna Blood Waltz) op. 354

In 1873, Vienna suffered an intense economic slump, somewhat equivalent to the Black Tuesday of the New York Stock Market in 1929. (Strangely enough the Viennese financial crisis was directly related to the great spurt in economic growth in the United States after the Civil War. European banks had overextended themselves in their rush to capitalize the industrial growth of the U.S., especially the railroads.) Strauss recognized the impact that a new waltz would have on Vienna, so to buoy the spirits, he wrote the *Wiener Blut Waltz.*

An der schönen, blauen Donau (The Beautiful Blue Danube Waltz) op. 314

The fierce seven-week war of 1866, known as the Austro-Prussian War, had been resolved. To celebrate this occasion, a major men's choral society of Vienna commissioned Strauss to provide a choral composition. So it was that the most famous waltz ever written came about because of a war and a choral group's desire to sing in praise of peace*. The Blue Danube Waltz* premiered on Feb. 15 1867. Though indeed the male chorus participated then, the words actually veiled the waltz's beauty and the listeners were not that impressed. When Strauss brought *The Blue Danube Waltz* to the great Paris Exhibition of that year --- without the words --- the beautiful simplicity of the initial strains charmed the hearers immediately. The popularity has never diminished. The late Stanley Kubrick, by gyrating his space vehicles in *2001--A Space Odessey* to the three-quarter time of *The Blue Danube Waltz*, provided the supreme compliment to Strauss. His music became the music of the heavens!

Franz Lehar (1870-1948)

Vilja from **Die Lustige Witwe (The Merry Widow)**

Franz Lehar, a composer from the Hungarian part of the Empire, would bring the Viennese operetta back to life after the death of Johann Strauss, Jr. After years of being a bandmaster in various regions of the empire, Lehar finally in 1899 was assigned to a post in Vienna. So it was that in the year of the Waltz King's death, Lehar arrived to bring new life to Viennese operetta. His masterpiece, *Die Lustige Witwe*, premiered in 1905. The beauty and "rightness" of plot and melody still provides the *Widow* a place on the stage of the world's great opera houses. "Vilja" is one of those plot-advancing devices, a story in song sung about a hunter who unfortunately falls in love with a wood-nymph, a spirit not likely to marry-for-life. The "Merry Widow" sings this to her guests at a party to suggest that all does not go well in the world of love…or Empires.

Program Notes of Concerts sponsored by the Danbury Concert Association

The Danbury Concert Association (DCA) was born in the 1930s, part of the concept of "community concerts" that swept the country. The concept was simple: the board of the association would raise money to engage four different professional vocalists or instrumentalists for the succeeding year and members would join for a modest fee that provided them a ticket to each of the concerts, and only members could attend the concerts. This non-

profit approach proved so successful that it continues today in Danbury, over 80 years from its initiation. Concert halls of the Western Connecticut State University have served as the musical site.

What follows are samples of the program notes of some great variety of professional artists that have performed during the time I have written notes for the DCA---1995 to the present.

DCA Sample 1: The International Sejong Soloists October 3, 1999

Comment: Chamber orchestras are especially welcome and over 20 years some 15 different ones have performed, including some from Montreal, Moscow and France.

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Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)	**Holberg Suite, Opus 40**
Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)	**Concerto for Flute and Strings in G Minor**
Saverio Mercadante (1795-1870)	**Concerto for Flute and Strings in E Minor, Op. 57**
Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)	**Chamber Symphony, Opus 110a**

In Gilbert and Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore*, poor Little Buttercup laments that "Things are seldom what they seem!" For today's concert, the compositions played seldom are what they were! Grieg's *Holberg Suite* was first a piano suite, Vivaldi's was first a recorder concerto, and the Shostakovich Chamber Symphony is a musically inflated version of his String Quartet No. 8. Only the Mercadante concerto is what it was!

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907) Holberg Suite, Opus 40

One wonders if there is some artistic virus that thrives in the people of Bergen, Norway, for three Scandanavian giants of the arts were born there. The first was Ludvig Holberg (1684-1754) who would become one of Scandanavia's great literary figures. Some years later came a mighty duo -- Ole Bull (1810-1880), a violin virtuoso who toured in the United States to great success and then----Edvard Grieg. Musical fate would link the "baroque" Holberg to the "romantic" Grieg. Holberg had left his native Bergen as a young man to roam Europe in the early 18th century to ultimately reside in Copenhagen. He adopted Danish as his language and helped establish Danish literature especially through his comedies which gained him the reputation as the "Moliere of the North." To honor Holberg in 1884, the 200th anniversary of his birth, the Bergen organizing committee turned to their newest "favorite son" to compose a musical tribute. (Grieg was already internationally known for his piano concerto and music for Ibsen's *Peer Gynt.)* They wanted him to write a cantata to be sung in December at the time of the unveiling of a statue of Holberg in the Main Square of Bergen. Grieg accepted half-heartedly and, in October, wrote to friends that not only was he bored in composing the choral work, but afraid of the event itself. Having had poor health most of his life, Grieg feared having to conduct outdoors in cold December, and predicted, though somewhat humorously, what might happen:

> *I can see it now: snow, hail, storm, and thunder, a large male chorus with open mouths into which the rain pours, and me conducting with a rain coat, winter coat, galoshes, and umbrella! Then, of course, a cold or God knows what other kind of illness! Ah well, that is one way to die for one's country!*

Well, he didn't die that way, though the uninspired cantata was forever laid to rest. But Grieg had a surprise. Four months later in March, 1885, he conducted the premiere in Bergen of a suite of pieces entitled *Aus Holbergs Zeit* ("From Holberg's Time.") Grieg had written the suite for piano the previous summer as his personal tribute to Holberg (before being asked to write the cantata.) With the orchestration, he produced one of his greatest works, full of strength and gentility, playfulness and meditation.

Grieg chose the musical language of the 18th Century, the era of Holberg, a type of French suite consisting of a Prelude, Sarabande, Gavotte/Musette, Air, and Rigaudon. The exhilarating pulsing sounds of the Prelude quickly sets an upbeat mood. The following Sarabande provides a long lyrical line that masks the innate three-quarter time of this dance form. With the Gavotte, the formality of court ballrooms emerges, but the internal Musette brings a

folk-song quality in contrast. The Air that follows, one of Grieg's most beautiful creations, is marked "Andante Religioso." Here, as in the Sarabande,Grieg puts more emphasis on the deeper strings. In the concluding Rigaudon, the Norwegian peasant fiddler emerges, a tribute to the folk violinists of Grieg's beloved country. It is as if Grieg musically honored his fellow Bergenite, Ole Bull, a man who championed the young Grieg.

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) Concerto for Flute and Strings in G Minor Opus 10, #2 ("La Notte")

1) Largo; 2) Presto ("Fantasmi"); 3) Largo; 4) Presto; 5) Largo ("Il Sonno"); 6) Allegro

If there is one word to describe most of Vivaldi's music, it's "lively." Not that he didn't write non-lively music for, after all, he championed the fast-slow-fast structure of concertos. And concertos he did write! Nearly four hundred! For years he was the musical director of La Pieta, a Venetian institution for orphaned girls whose orchestra became famous beyond the barcarollian waters and weekly concerts demanded new music. Though some of these concertos were published in his lifetime (including the six flute concertos of Opus 10), most remained in darkened chambers only to be found years after his death. Vivaldi was one of the first composers to give programmatic names to some of his compositions. To the flute concerto, Opus 10, #2, he gave the name *La Notte* (The Night). Its structure is unusual being in six short movements (instead of the usual three), a sort-of fantasia about episodes in a night. The slow-fast alternations of the pieces provides the flautist with many challenges from the vigor of the second movement entitled "Fantasmi" ("The goblins will get you if you don't watch out!") to the lulling strains of the fifth movement "Il sonno," (Ah, sleep at last!) Overall, it's a short night.

Saverio Mercadante (1795-1870) Concerto for Flute and Strings in E Minor, Op. 57

Time for a quiz. In the opera-crazy world of Italy in the 1840s, who was the most-respected figure?

A) Rossini; B) Bellini; C) Donizetti; D) Verdi; E) None of these.

Well, if you chose the last answer ("E"), you were right. The operatic winner for that era (but no longer champion) is Saverio Mercadante, composer of sixty operas. Born on the Adriatic near Bari, Mercadante studied in Naples, his principal site of operation throughout life. His initial years emphasized orchestral works; his mature years dealt almost exclusively with operas. He composed both for Italian opera houses as well as those of Spain and Vienna. How, you might ask, can someone who wrote sixty operas and reached such a respected pinnacle in opera-loving Italy disappear into the stage dust behind La Scala? The answer? His operas, some immensely successful in their time, really provided the transition from Rossini and Bellini to the genius of Verdi. From a distance, one can be cynical of the forgotten Mercadante as the following critic was in 1889:

> *In Italy he was long regarded as the most learned of contemporary Italian composers, an estimation which shows quite sufficiently the low condition of musical learning in Italy at the time.*

However, musicologists do give him credit for bringing the importance of a vital libretto to opera as well as emphasizing the brass in the opera orchestra, something Verdi very much adopted.

Mercadante had written six flute concertos by the age of twenty-four. Of those, the E Minor concerto is now one of the few compositions by which he is remembered. The concerto is lengthy (the first movement in length is equal to the entire Vivaldi concerto on today's program) and varied in musical structure. There is real musical "meat" here. The beginning movement, A*llegro Maestoso,* provides a lengthy introduction of the two principal themes that the flute and orchestra then treat in sonata form. The themes are notable for their contrast, the first utilizes a forceful ascending phrase, the second is Mozartean in its "singability." The second movement, *Largo*, gives the flute another beautiful melody, another opportunity to be lyrical. With the third movement, *Rondo Russo*, Mercadante

provides an emphatic rhythm in a mode he claims to be Russian-like. No matter what the folk emphasis here (Isn't it more like a classical "polka"?), the movement is stirring with the flute both dancing with partners (the strings) or simply encircling the on-going melodies.

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) Chamber Symphony, Opus 110a

1. Largo 2. Allegro molto 3. Allegretto 4. Largo

Dmitri Shostakovich, educated to the piano at home by his mother, suffered through the early years of the Russian Revolution, studied under Glazanouv at the Leningrad Conservatory, and often found poverty staring him in the face. His symphonies and operas ran a roller-coaster of approval and disapproval from Stalin and his newspaper mouthpiece, Pravda. That Shostakovich loved Mother Russia, there can be no doubt, but he suffered for his genius. In 1960, he wrote his String Quartet No. 8; his heart and soul filled this musical autobiography.

Shostakovich knew the violist Rudolph Barshai as a member of the famed Borodin String Quartet in Moscow. According to Erik Smith: "The Borodin Quartet played this work (String Quartet #8) to the composer at his Moscow home, hoping for his criticisms. But Shostakovich, overwhelmed by this beautiful realization of his most personal feelings, buried his head in his hands and wept. When they had finished playing, the four musicians quietly packed up their instruments and stole out of the room." Barshai, when he founded the now-famed Moscow Chamber Orchestra, faced the problem of a meager modern repertoire for chamber orchestras. Deciding to help his own cause, he gained the blessing of Shostakovich to arrange the String Quartet No. 8 into a chamber symphony. The Quartet is Opus 110; The Chamber Symphony is Opus 110a.

As life is an unbroken tapestry from birth to death, so is Shostakovich's autobiographical composition seamless; no separation occurs between the movements. The personal building blocks are many. The first movement and portions throughout are constructed on Shostakovich's musical four note signature: D, E flat, C, B natural. In Russian and German "E Flat" is "Es" (pronounced "S") and "B Natural" is "H" in German musical notation. The four notes thus are DSCH, four key letters of his name when spelled in the traditional manner with a "c": Shostakovich. From the somber beginnings of the four-note theme in the first movement, Shostakovich moves directly and brashly into the second movement with a pulsating theme of a Jewish folk-song from his piano trio. (In his memoirs Testimony, Shostakovich details his kinship with the seemingly eternal difficulties of the Jewish people.) A satirical waltz pervades the third movement in harsh, gypsy-like fashion. The graphic fourth movement, the longest of the quartet, begins with what has been described as the drone of airplanes and the sharp crackling of gunfire. (Shostakovich composed the quartet in 1960 in Dresden, a city singularly destroyed in World War II from the air.) Between the staccato repetitions of gunfire, Shostakovich introduces themes from past compositions, none more meaningfully than the cello's soulful tune from Lady MacBeth of Mtsensk. This opera first gained wide Russian acceptance when written in 1934, but then in 1936 the Stalinist press launched an attack upon him for his "Chaos instead of Music" especially reacting to Lady MacBeth. The choice of this theme clearly epitomizes the "slings and arrows of outrageous [political] fortune" he suffered. After the final burst of warfare, the quartet in its final movement returns to the theme of Shostakovich's musical signature and ends on a sigh of resignation.

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DCA Sample 2: Anne-Marie McDermott, Piano Nov. 21, 1999

Comment: Pianists remain favorites for concert goers. Anne-Marie McDermott was one of the first female pianists to appear for the DCA. It was not long after her debut with the New York Philharmonic. The chronology of the program suggested an opening about the piano's structural evolution

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) **Partita No. 2 in C Minor**
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) **32 Variations on an Original Theme in C Minor,**
Sonata in E Flat Major, Op 31, No. 3
Frederic Chopin (1810-1849) **Sonata No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 58**
Alfred Grünfeld (1852-1924) **Soiree de Vienne**

The traditional piano recital often provides a chronological approach to the sequence of compositions played. So, too, does today's program as the music moves from Bach to Beethoven to Chopin to Grünfeld (though Grünfeld's music is basically that of Johann Strauss, Jr.) Not only does this cover a century and a half of time, but it covers the development of the instrument that today we call a piano, earlier called a pianoforte. We sometimes forget that composers can only compose for the instruments of their time. Bach could not have composed a sonata of the magnitude of a Beethoven even if he wanted to. What Bach had were "claviers," a generic name for either harpsichords (strings were plucked) or clavichords (metal striking metal) – both were instruments with a thin, metallic sound. Their range was four octaves with no "piano e forte," (soft and loud.) What you plucked was what you got! In 1710, Bartolomeo Cristofori, a harpsichord maker from Padua, produced the first "pianoforte." It would take some one hundred years after that to bring the piano to perfection. Cristofari's instrument was called a *gravicembalo col piano e forte* ("harpsichord with soft and loud") and had a keyboard action that provided a hammer that struck the strings and quickly rebounded, combined with a damping device. This concept remains central to all pianos today and is clearly stated in the German word for piano: *hammerklavier*.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) **Partita No. 2 in C Minor**

The six "partitas" that Bach published in 1731 had the overall title *Clavierübung* (or "Fun at the Keyboard") and were really "dance suites." One must realize that much of the keyboard music that Bach wrote had one specific aim: to improve the keyboard abilities of both his wife and his children. (Since several of his children became major composers in their own right, Bach was a good teacher as well as transmitter of an appropriate musical genetic code!)

The "dance suite" of Bach's time emerged from the era of troubadors who brought from land to land a great variety of music types. Dance rhythms moved from country to country and composers of the baroque period built their suites from these favorite dance rhythms. Bach introduces the Partita No. 2 with a **Sinfonia** (an overture with a fugal conclusion,) then he follows with the traditional dances. First, an **Allemande**, of German origin, somewhat stately in 2/4 time. (The name persists in square dance calling, e.g. "Allemande left with your left hand.") The **Courante** following, French in origin, is brisk (think of a "current" flowing at fast pace.) A **Sarabande**, slow and elegant with the emphasis on the second of three beats, came from the Spanish lands. The **Rondeau** following, though not a dance, prefigures the rondo (main section returning at end) form. Finally, a **Capriccio**, which is in fact a form of gigue (or English "jig") ends the Suite in merry form.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) **32 Variations on an Original Theme in C Minor, WoO80**

Beethoven loved the "variation" form and wrote some twenty different compositions of that type. His first ventures in the form took known melodies (such as Mozart's "Se vuol balare" from *Marriage of Figaro*) upon which to work his wondrous ways. In 1806, four years after he composed the Sonata on today's program, he composed these thirty-two variations on his own theme, a tune some seventeen notes long. Now thirty-two variations with a playing time of about ten minutes, suggests rather abbreviated pianistic thoughts. Each variation, except the final one, is only eight measures long. One suspects that Beethoven truly was trying to find out how clever he could be in multiple variations. Often the theme is masked in a plethora of notes, and only hinted at, but he returns it in the right hand several times to remind the listener what set the variation wheel in motion.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) Sonata in E Flat Major, Op 31, No. 3

I. Allegro II. Scherzo: Allegretto vivace III. Menuetto: Moderato e grazioso. IV. Presto con fuoco.

Beethoven's thirty-two piano sonatas, the cornerstone of piano literature, are one of his greatest legacies. (I suppose one could say that his thirty-two sonatas are indeed "variations" on a theme!) Beginning with his first three piano sonatas, dedicated to Joseph Haydn in 1795, Beethoven throughout his compositional life composed sonatas that confirmed his growth as the "monarch of the piano." The Sonata in E-flat Major (composed in 1802) is considered by some as the first of the sonatas to pre-figure the great ones to come later, such as the *Waldstein* and *Appassionata.*

Few sonatas by anyone provide such immediate pleasure upon hearing it than this four-movement work. The first movement begins with a "quizzical" three-note theme that permeates the "easy-going" allegro movement. The second movement, "scherzo," could not be a happier experience with its frenetic movement forward, a staccato-like melody assuaged by slower, reflective moments. (It is this movement that has provided the nickname "The Hunt" for the sonata.) The third movement is a beautiful song, one of Beethoven's loveliest. The fourth movement explodes onto the scene and with the left-hand's consistent driving force the movement has a sense of joy that makes the listener want to stand and shout "Bravo, Beethoven!"

Frederic Chopin (1810-1849) Sonata No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 58

I. Allegro Maestoso II. Scherzo: Molto vivace III. Largo IV. Finale: Presto non tanto

Frederic Chopin in 1844 was in a downhill slide. His affair with George Sand was unraveling and his father died. Composing became very difficult, but he managed to assemble his third sonata, his last major work. Five years before he had published his second sonata, with the famed "Funeral March" movement. Critics then and now still fault Chopin on his ability to write a cohesive work with the name "sonata." Robert Schumann had said of the second sonata that Chopin had simply tied together "four of his maddest children." Like them or not, the works of the mature Chopin provide the listener with music of incredible beauty and lightness, but also (as in the beginning of the last movement of the B Minor sonata) power and drama.
With the 150th anniversary of Chopin's death, this writer asked several musically knowledgeable persons the question: "What makes the music of Chopin so quickly recognizable." The answers seemed quite pertinent: (1) Chopin's melody line is always supremely clear and limpid, and (2) a hint of melancholy seems omnipresent. Another clue – his use of chromatic and/or arpeggio runs that add a filigree to the composition (as in the second movement of Sonata No. 3) What do you think gives Chopin's music such identifiable qualities?

The **first movement** of Sonata No. 3 provides a variety of musical ideas, with one of those uniquely Chopin melodies central to it. The short **second movement** seems the most disjointed as the rapid piano fireworks surround a quiet center. The **third movement** might give one a sense of a solemnity with its somewhat slow march rhythm, yet the melodies, though perhaps nostalgic, are not sad. Without question, the **final movement** is the jewel of the Sonata. The music, from its first dramatic notes, is uplifting and the structure, an ABABA form, provides a satisfying conclusion to this work.

Alfred Grünfeld (1852-1924) **Soiree de VIenne**

One hundred years ago, "The Waltz King" died. The last name you would think of for piano music is Johann Strauss, Jr., for he wrote none. But thanks to his friend, Alfred Grünfeld, a master pianist in Vienna, Strauss is with us today. The great piano teachers such as Franz Liszt and Theodor Kullak loosed upon Europe a gaggle of great pianists in the latter part of the 19th century. With the center of music being Vienna and with Johann Strauss Jr. rocking the rolling Danube with great melodies, these pianists wanted to play his melodies for the salon and the concert hall. Paraphrases of Strauss's music abounded (many written by the pianists themselves) and one of the finest was the *Soiree de Vienne* by Grünfeld. Its principal themes are from Strauss's opera *Die Fledermaus*. The flourish with which

the *Soiree* begins might even have been left over from Chopin, but the opulence of the entire composition could only be a reflection of the Vienna that turned the century a hundred years ago.

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DCA Sample 3: The Weilerstein Trio April 5, 2003

Comment: The unusual "family trio," the Weilersteins (father: violinist; mother: pianist; daughter: cellist) brought the music of Astor PIazzolla to Danbury for the first time. (Daughter Alisa is now a world-famous cellist.) It called for a lengthy look at the man who renewed life in the tango.

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Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904)	**Trio in G Minor, Op. 26**
(Franz) Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)	**Trio in A Major, Hoboken 15:9**
Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)	**Autumn and Spring from "The Seasons"**
Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904)	**Piano Quartet in D Major, Op. 23**

Let's start with a question: What do an 18th century maker of carriage wheels, a 19th century butcher and innkeeper, and a 20th century barber have in common? Here's the answer: they were the fathers of the composers of the music on tonight's program. (So much for apparent genetic predisposition to music, at least in males.)

Joseph Haydn's Austrian mother and father (the wheelwright), poor though they were, loved music and recognized the talents of their son; they sent him away from home at age six for musical instruction and, as it turned out, his departure proved permanent. Antonin Dvořák's father (the innkeeper), on the other hand, insisted that his musically adept youngster be an innkeeper like himself; contrary to the father's wishes, an uncle provided funding for the 16-year old to finally separate himself from his family and study music in Prague, the capital of his homeland, Bohemia (now part of the Czech Republic). Astor Piazzolla's father (the barber) brought his family from their native Argentina in 1925 to live in Greenwich Village. In 1929, he gave 8-year-old Astor his first bandoneon, the accordion-like instrument (originated in Germany) that gives a special sound to tango. The family returned to Argentina in 1936, where Piazzolla would bring tango to the classical forefront in the final decades of the 20th century.

Tonight's program sandwiches Piazzolla and Haydn between two early Dvořák works.

Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904) **Trio in G Minor, Op. 26**

For twenty years after leaving home, Dvořák studied composition, violin, piano, and organ. He played in the orchestra of the National Opera in Prague for eleven years, a time described by him as one of "hard study, occasional composing, much revision, a great deal of thinking, and very little eating." He married in 1873, and the following year his "Airs from Moravia" brought him not only a government pension, but the lifelong friendship and support of Johannes Brahms, who recognized the potential of this still regional composer.

If the Trio in G Minor, composed in January 1876, has an emotional underpinning, it would relate to the death of Dvořák's infant daughter just three months before. The bold chords that open both the first and last movements may have a fate aspect, but it is the works innate simplicity of melody and variety of tonal color that one ultimately recalls. The second movement, Largo, is especially reflective and provides what one writer calls the "magical coloring from Dvořák's instrumental palette." The third and fourth movements provide themes and rhythms more in keeping with the composer's love of folk melodies, even though his famed "Slavonic Dances" were still two years away

(Franz) Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) **Trio in A Major, Hoboken 15:9**

Haydn as friend and sometime teacher of 25-year-old Mozart, began with their meeting in 1781, and may have been a basis for this work. Mozart's special ability as a composer for the piano impressed Haydn deeply, leading to the older composer writing more for keyboard instruments, such as piano trios as well as piano concertos. In 1785, the year he wrote this two-movement trio, Haydn visited Mozart in Vienna. There he was taken to a salon where, in a stunning surprise, Mozart presented a program of six quartets that he had composed and dedicated to Haydn with deep gratitude for his friendship. It was at this musical moment that Haydn confessed to Mozart's father, "I tell you before God and as an honest man---your son is the greatest composer I know, either personally or by name." Surely, Mozart could have said the same about his friend and teacher.

The original published name for "Trio in A Major" is: "Sonata for the Harpsichord or Piano-Forte with an Accompaniment for a Violin and Violoncello," suggesting a featured role for the keyboard. After the quiescent Adagio, the theme of the vivace movement is something of a musical rainbow, ascending quickly, peaking, then descending.

Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992) **Autumn and Spring from "The Seasons in Buenos Aires"**

Tango is to Argentina what ragtime is to the United States—music that emerged mainly from the seamier side of life (such as bordellos) and originally played by the disenfranchised--poor immigrants (tango) or African-Americans (ragtime). Piazzolla and his bandoneon became part of tango orchestras once his family returned permanently to Argentina in 1936. There he began a life of arranging and composing, always with tango in prominence.

Over the years, he studied in Argentina with Alberto Ginastera, the country's most famous serious music composer, and in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, teacher of Aaron Copland. For many years, he led his own tango orchestra and wrote film scores, leading a life that coalesced serious and popular music. In the introduction to Astor Piazzolla: A Memoir, Fernando Gonzalez writes that Piazzolla's compositions "retained tango's poignancy and lyricism while rejecting its tendencies toward sentimentality and bouts of morbid self-pity…incorporating the influences of Maurice Ravel, Claude Debussy, Giacomo Puccini, and Olivier Messiaen, as well as the occasional nod to the cool jazz of [Gerry] Mulligan and Lennie Tristano."

In 1960, Piazzolla organized his Quintet, an instrumental cluster of bandoneon, violin, piano, electric guitar, and bass that stimulated his musical imagination. In 1964, for this group of instruments, he composed a short work entitled "Summer in Buenos Aires," and over the next six years he added musical impressions of the city's other three seasons. Apparently he had no intention that they should be considered a suite.

With the popularity of Vivaldi's "Four Seasons," it is natural to ask whether Piazzolla meant his "seasons" as homage to Vivaldi. The answer, according to the official Piazzolla website (www.piazzolla.org/biography) is "No." This isn't unexpected; the changing seasons have attracted many a composer besides Vivaldi, including Haydn, Tchaikovsky, Glazunov and even the American iconoclast John Cage. However, it should be mentioned that in "Summer in Buenos Aires," Piazzolla clearly uses two quotes from Vivaldi's "Winter." This may be the composer's subtle way of reminding we northerners that summer in the southern hemisphere is our winter.

Piazzolla's music "alternates between furious excitement and painful quiescence." This is clearly the case in the two "Seasons" on this program. In "Autumn" a skittish violin plays against a tango melody, followed by a cello's solemn chromatic melody. After repeats of these, the ending is both frenetic and abrupt. In "Spring" the violin proceeds in leaps up and down the scale, with a secure tango rhythm underpinning. After a slow lyrical segment, the violin leaps again, punctuated by brisk chords and an ultimate fading away to silence.

(All of Piazzolla's "Seasons" are recorded by violinist Gidon Kremer and a chamber orchestra on "Eight Seasons" [Nonesuch CD 79568-2], which also includes Vivaldi's "Four Seasons.")

Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904) **Piano Quartet in D Major, Op. 23**

This quartet was composed in spring 1875, six months prior to the trio that opened this program. Dvořák, then 34 years of age, was now moving away from the influences of other composers, particularly Richard Wagner, and feeling more comfortable with his own natural lyricism. He turned more and more to the folk tunes of his native Bohemia and surrounding regions, something apparent in this piano quartet, which is in three rather than four movements.

The first movement, "Allegro moderato" which takes up nearly one-half the entire playing time, should be received by the listener in the manner offered—quietly exuberant. A two-bar motif at the beginning is brought back over and over again, with heroic outbursts contrasted by quiet interludes. For the second movement, "Andantino," Dvořák uses a theme and variation concept. The five variations have varied instrumental textures, and exemplify the composer's effective use of the piano in chamber music.

Most unusual is the third movement in which Dvořák combines two movements into one, a scherzo and finale combined. If Beethoven's 7th Symphony has been labeled "the apotheosis of the dance," so too could this movement. It begins with a waltz, moves into a furiant (a Bohemian dance rhythm), then after several alternations of these rhythms, ends with a brisk jig. Both works on this program demonstrate why Dvořák might be called the "Czech Schubert," for his melodies are always pleasing and eloquently simple.

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DCA Sample 4: Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players Apr. 9, 2004

Comment: What appears to be another concert from the classical era provides some really interesting stories, particularly the connecting tissue that Hummel provided between Beethoven and Mozart.
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Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) **Clarinet Quartet in B-flat major (K. 317d)**
Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837) **Septet in C Major, Op. 114, "The Military"**
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) **Piano Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 16**

The sequence of tonight's program---first Mozart, then Hummel, then Beethoven---provides an opportunity to bring some interesting musical history into focus. For 21st century concertgoers, Johann Nepomuk Hummel is probably best known for his trumpet and piano concertos. In the early 19th century, he was considered to be the equal of Beethoven as a pianist. He had come to Vienna as an eight-year-old when his father was hired to direct music for a new theater in 1786. Knowing that his son had enormous musical talent, Herr Hummel had the courage to go directly to Mozart and ask him to be Johann's teacher. Mozart, always reluctant to teach because it took away from his composing, listened to the child play and was so impressed that he took him into his home where, according to the father: "My Nepomuk moved into Mozart's home, where he was treated like a child of the family."

Young Hummel stayed with Mozart for two years, then his father took him on a three-year tour of Europe to show him off in the same way that Mozart's father, Leopold, had done with his genius child. Johann, after years of maturing as a pianist (he was also a skilled composer and teacher), became a keyboard rival to Beethoven . Carl Czerny, a pupil of Beethoven, heard Hummel play and wrote: "Never before had I heard such…clarity and elegance in performance…or even such good taste in improvisation." Vienna broke into two piano camps: those that preferred Hummel to those that found the more forceful approach of Beethoven to their liking.

One of Hummel's favors to Beethoven was in bringing his symphonies to greater exposure by arranging them for piano, four hands, but, according to Harold Schonberg in The Great Pianists, "Hummel and Beethoven had an uneasy off-and-on friendship that foundered when Beethoven tore-up Hummel's four-hand arrangement of the

Fidelio Overture…..They were reconciled on Beethoven's deathbed, and Hummel was one of the pallbearers at the funeral."

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) Clarinet Quartet in B-flat major (K. 317d)

It is well known that Costanze, Mozart's widow, was left with more debts than revenue after the death of the composer. Aid came in the person of the Austrian Emperor Leopold, who sponsored a concert that, along with his own contribution, paid off all of Mozart's debts. Still Costanze needed more money. As one means of raising necessary funds she sold all of the unpublished manuscripts of her husband to the Viennese music publisher Johan Anton André (1775-1842). Andre was himself a composer and, in the style of the day, would transform a composition into one for other instruments. So it is believed that it was André who transformed Mozart's Violin Sonata (K. 378) into this clarinet quartet. Of course, André did not claim to be the quartet's composer. After all, a work by the well-known Mozart would sell on name alone. The clarinet provides another purveyor of the cantabile themes of the great composer in this three-movement work.

Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837) Septet in C major, Op. 114, "The Military" for piano, trumpet, clarinet, flute, violin, cello, and double bass.

The septet form for a chamber work is rarely used by composers, perhaps because of the difficulty of finding a musical balance for seven diverse instruments. But this didn't faze Hummel. In 1816, he published a septet, for piano, horn, oboe, flute and strings. Carl Czerny, now a pianist and soon-to-be teacher of Franz Liszt, reported that when Vienna first heard this septet it took the city by storm. (Schonberg, in the aforementioned book, notes that Hummel "was a highly regarded composer in his day---overrated then, underrated now.") Well, Hummel must have remembered the success of that septet and in 1830 published his second, "The Military," unusual in its employment of a trumpet as one of the seven instruments. Perhaps it was a token memorial to his father, who, prior to his employment in Vienna, was the director of music for the Imperial School of Military Music.

Hummel uses the trumpet sparingly, but when he does it is effective without being overpowering. Though Hummel might be expected to have the piano be the star throughout, it is in fact rather modest in its presence, but never anything but a pleasure to hear. The finale alone is worth the price of admission. But, even with a trumpet in the score, don't expect a rousing ending. (P.S. No, this Hummel had no connection to the Hummel figurines; they are a 20th century development.)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) Piano Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 16

Beethoven didn't need an André to change one of his chamber works into another; he did it himself. Inspired by the Mozart quintet for piano, oboe, clarinet, horn and bassoon, Beethoven at age 26 composed his own quintet for the same instruments. When he published it in Vienna in 1801 (he had completed it five years earlier), it was accompanied by his own transcription of the work into the Piano Quartet in E-flat major, with both given opus number 16.

By the time of these compositions, and before his first symphony, Beethoven had already produced several dozen chamber works: sonatas for various pairings of instruments, many trios, as well as six string quartets and a septet. One cannot help but listen to this work and not sense a completely confident composer. Unlike Hummel, Beethoven wrote a piano part here that is on the virtuosic side. The melodies flow throughout, and the rondo finale simply surges along with constant merriment to its conclusion.

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DCA Sample 5: Camerata New York October 12, 2008

Comment: A 32-member Camerata New York was a chamber orchestra able to navigate the variety of classical, romantic and impressionistic worlds.
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Robert Schumann (1810-1856)	**Manfred Overture and Suite**
Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)	**Ancient Airs and Dances, Suite No. 1**
Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)	**Ma Mere L'Oye (Mother Goose) Suite**
Wolfang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)	**Symphony No. 41, "Jupiter" (K. 551)**

Many different things can get a composer excited. Robert Schumann, whose boyhood was filled with reading literary classics, was inspired by Manfred, the remorseful hero of the Lord Byron poem. Ottorino Respighi, after the great success of his tone poem, *The Fountains of Rome*, looked back to melodies composed centuries before for further inspiration. A friend's two children provided Maurice Ravel, who never married, so much joy that he composed piano pieces for them based on fairy tale characters. Then one comes to Mozart, who seemed to need little inspiration: the notes just tumbled out on demand. And for his very last symphony, the result is as close to a musical miracle as one will get.

Robert Schumann (1810-1856) Manfred Overture and Suite

In Europe, during much of the 19th century, the world of romanticism paraded emotions over intellect. Lord Byron in literature and Robert Schumann in music epitomized the romantic spirit. Manfred, the tormented hero of the Byron poem, found a place in Schumann's own harried musical soul. A friend of Schumann's recalled hearing the composer read from Byron's *Manfred*: "His voice suddenly failed him, tears started from his eyes, and he was so overcome that he could read no further."

This was the emotion with which Schumann in 1849 composed incidental music for a theatrical production of *Manfred.* Many critics concur that the *Manfred Overture* is Schumann at his symphonic best. The dramatic three chords that open the overture lead directly into music of great passion-- dark, turbulent music that has a sense of urgency, but which ultimately fades away into quietude at the end, the oblivion that the hero Manfred ultimately sought.

In the famed 1943 Carnegie Hall New York Philharmonic concert where Leonard Bernstein, a neophyte conductor, substituted for the ailing Bruno Walter at "the last minute," the first number on the program was the *Manfred Overture*. He later admitted that as he walked onstage, he feared the tricky rhythm of those first three chords because if he and the orchestra didn't get them right, he was doomed. He got them right----and the rest is history.

Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936) Ancient Airs and Dances, Suite No. 1

Nationalism in music hit its stride in the late 19th Century, led by Russian composers who brought Russian history into music, particularly in operas by Mussorgsky, Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov. That Ottorino Respighi in his early studies would spend several years studying in Moscow with Rimsky-Korsakov suggests a reason why Respighi would become Italy's most nationalistic composer. For his tone poems, he found inspiration in Rome's pine trees and fountains, church windows, and even paintings by Botticelli. These works brought him great fame, but he also cherished Italy's musical past and looked to music composed centuries before for the lute, arranging his choices into three beautiful suites of *Ancient Airs and Dances*.

In Suite No 1, each of the four movements quickly paints pictures of dancers. In the first movement the dancers are elegant; in the second, they are involved in a lively galliard, a 16th century dance. (One of the melodies chosen by Respighi for this movement was composed by Vincenzo Galilei, the father of Galileo, the "father of modern science.") In the third movement with oboe and harp, a solo dancer provides reflective time. Finally the whole company, with brass flourishes, brings the curtain down.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) Ma Mere L'Oye (Mother Goose) Suite

"Ravel…used to tell me marvelous stories…Invariably he would begin 'Once upon a time…'" So wrote Mimi Gobedski in 1937 as she reflected on the piano suite the composer had written for her and her brother Jean 30 years earlier. Ravel, a family friend and forever bachelor, loved the children and hoped that his "Mother Goose Suite" would encourage them to practice and ultimately perform it. Alas, they never got to that level. Years later Ravel orchestrated the suite.

No, the stories are not from the Mother Goose we know, but from the 17th century French fairy tale writer Charles Perrault, including Sleeping Beauty, Beauty and the Beast, and Tom Thumb. Ravel was a master of orchestration, and appears to have loved giving woodwind players special opportunities. In "Beauty and the Beast" the conversation of Beauty (a clarinet) with that terrible Beast (a contrabassoon) seems reasonable enough. Then through the magic of a harp glissando the Beast is transformed into a handsome prince. In "Laideronette" a princess, transformed into a small ogress, goes to the land of the "Pagodas," porcelain creatures no larger than she. The oriental atmosphere is quickly established with sounds of tinkling crystal. In the finale, Sleeping Beauty is rescued by the prince in the fairy garden, and the work ends with a long crescendo of Ravelian beauty. Are there wedding bells heard in the distance?

Wolfang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) Symphony No. 41, "Jupiter" (K. 551)

Three years before he died, the great Mozart composed his final three symphonies in a total of six weeks. He wrote them at a time when his wife's illness and the ever-circling creditors suggest that Mozart must have been in despair. Perhaps some sadness can be found in the Symphony No. 40 in G minor, but certainly none shows up in the joyful No. 41 in C major, his final symphony. The name "Jupiter" was probably given by a music publisher. Few would challenge the appropriateness of linking this work to the highest ranking Roman god for it is a heavenly work.

The first movement begins with a stirring martial quality that immediately suggests the nobility of the entire work. The second movement's pacific quality is such that Woody Allen, an unexpected Mozart lover, gives this movement a place of honor in his short list of "reasons for living." The lilting minuet of the third movement is perfect to set the stage for a final movement that leaves the spirit as energized as any music can. Starting with a simple four note motif, Mozart adds new themes until in the symphony's final few minutes, all five themes are meshed into a fugal form that staggers the imagination. Then with the sound of trumpets and drums, Mozart's symphonic output comes to an end, as noble a conclusion as will be found in any symphony, before or after.

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DCA Sample 6: Joel Fan, Piano September 18, 2011

Comment: Sometimes an artist chooses a program of vastly different works from many eras and of many cultures. Joel Fan is one of the artists who seeks variety of "international music," the classics and modernists. Writing a prologue for such a mix of styles led to the word "eclectic." Also today's world of Internet strongly demands, such as in the case of Dia Succari, that websites featuring a composer's works, be spelled out in the program notes.

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Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915) **Piano Sonata No. 5, Op. 53**
Dia Succari (1935-2010) **La Nuit du Destin**
Margaret Bonds (1913-1972) **Troubled Water**
Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943) **Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 36 in B-flat minor**
William Bolcom (1938-) **Nine New Bagatelles**
Leon Kirchner (1919-2009) **Sonata No. 3, "The Forbidden"**
George Gershwin (1898-1937) **Rhapsody in Blue**

"*Eclectic (adjective): composed of elements drawn from various sources."* Webster's definition certainly fits today's program, with an added double meaning in this case of "composed." And the composers are: Two Russians (Scriabin and Rachmaninov), two boys from Brooklyn, each born of Russian parents (Kirchner and Gershwin), a Syrian in Paris (Succari), an African-American woman (Bonds), and a ragtime expert who won three Grammys for a three-hour long choral work (Bolcom). Yes, I think we can say that Joel Fan has "drawn from various sources."

Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915) **Piano Sonata No. 5, Op. 53 (1907)**

Though in later years, he would be known as "Scriabin the Mystic," he first studied piano together with Rachmaninov in his birthplace of Moscow. He gained European fame as a pianist performing his Chopin-influenced early compositions—etudes, preludes, nocturnes. His ten piano sonatas, written throughout his composing life, evidence his change from tonal Romanticism to atonal Modernism. Sonata No. 5 (from 1907) is one of the transitional compositions and emerged concurrently to his major orchestral work, "The Poem of Ecstasy." (Scriabin in life had been obsessed with issues of eternity, divinity and destiny.) An epigraph of mystical meaning prefaces the manuscript of this fifth sonata: "I summon you to life, hidden longings…Embryos of life, I bring you boldness." Indeed, the sonata demands bold pianism. (Sviatoslov Richter, a Scriabin champion, described it as one of the two most difficult pieces in the entire piano repertory.) The relatively short sonata begins its fascinating life with a startling massive bass tremolo and then rockets up to the highest registers. Throughout, there are changes from moments of quiet reflection to those of energetic joy. It is a work that Chopin might have written if he had lived to be 100. Now how's that for something mystical.

Dia Succari (1935-2010) **La Nuit du Destin (1978)**

To counter the current sad reports of turmoil in Syria, it's important to know that Euterpe, the muse of music, has a home in Aleppo, the birthplace of the late Dia Succari. Aleppo, the country's largest city (now over two million people and inhabited for over five millenia), has been a center of Arabic traditional and classic music. Not surprisingly, in Nuit du Destin the composer has drawn from the area's musical past. One haunting theme is repeated in various guises, with pianistic suggestions of Arabic instruments throughout. To an Occidental listener, certain sequences of notes conjure up the mysteries of the Near East. A unique aspect of this "Night of Destiny" is that the composer asks the pianist to perform appropriate improvisations in the middle of the scripted music. (To hear more of Dia Succari's music, go to his website http://www.dia-succari.com and click on "Musique," then click on any of the dozens of his compositions and hear them played.)

Margaret Bonds (1913-1972) **Troubled Water (1967)**

Few concertgoers could name even one female African-American composer of classical music. To the student of such composers, the names of Margaret Bonds and her teacher Florence Price would come quickly to mind. Margaret Bonds, Chicago-born, was first piano-trained by her mother then later by Price for both piano and composition. During college (Northwestern University) she won a prize for composition, and then became the first black female to solo with the Chicago Symphony. After moving to Harlem, she became a close friend of the "Harlem Renaissance" poet Langston Hughes, later putting many of his poems to music, with particular success for the poem

"The Negro Speaks of Music." As many a black composer has done, Bonds turned often to spirituals for thematic material in both choral and piano compositions. "Wade in the Water" was the basis for her Troubled Water.

"Wade in the water; Wade in the water, children; Wade in the water; God's going to trouble the water."

This so-called "coded spiritual" sent a message to escaping slaves to head for a river, wade in the waters and thus throw off the scent for search dogs heading their way. Here Bonds beautifully supports the melody in a variety of contrapuntal ways, including a clear jazz beat at one time. The conclusion pits the "Wade in the water" melodic fragment against that of "God's going to trouble the water" in a powerful conclusion.

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943) Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 36 in B-flat minor (1913)

Unlike his classmate Scriabin, Rachmaninov composed only two piano sonatas, with the second the most often played. From its first majestic chords to the dramatic ending, it is of the grand manner. Written in 1913, concurrent with his choral work, "The Bells," aspects of tintinnabulation are discernable in the first movement of the sonata. In later life Rachmaninov had a desire to reduce the length of some of his earlier works. He told a friend in the early 1930s that "I look at my early work and see how there is lot that is superfluous." Yet, some have suggested that since his means of livelihood in the 1930s were in performances of his own works, perhaps he wanted to shape some of the works more appropriately for his aging hands. Don't think, however, that the revised sonata, though five minutes shorter, is less challenging to play than the original. Joel Fan at this concert is playing the 1931 version, but adding in some modifications (extra lines and notes) from the 1913 version.

William Bolcom (1938-) Nine New Bagatelles (2006)

Bagatelle (noun): An unimportant or insignificant thing. A short, light piece of verse or music.

Don't let the definition fool you. It takes talent, imagination and cleverness to compose such trifles well and Bolcom thrives on these three gifts. Many of us know Bolcom for his recordings of ragtime or recordings with his wife Joan Morris of songs of the Victorian era or even specific songwriters such as Cole Porter. Meanwhile Bolcom has a long catalogue of compositions, including eight symphonies, four operas (including one based on Arthur Miller's drama A View from the Bridge), cabaret songs, and his magnum opus: Songs of Innocence and of Experience, a three-hour orchestral/choral work of 55 songs, setting William Blake's poems to music; that one took him 25 years to complete. Nine New Bagatelles took far less time in 2006. (He had composed Nine Bagatelles---the "Old" ones---years before.) Joel Fan, in the CD notes for his premiere recording of the these new bagatelles, wrote that these are reminiscent of Schumann *"with their individual inscriptions and sharply-etched characters, always drawn with a knowing wink---playful, brutal, plaintive (like birds), ghostly, sweetly innocent, rhythmic, waltzing (but forgetting), omniscient, and finally, a funeral march."* Talk about variety of subjects and musical styles!

Leon Kirchner (1919-2009) Sonata No. 3, "The Forbidden" (2006)

How does one become three? Leon Kirchner had a way of doing that. The story starts at Harvard where the composer taught, reflecting in his teaching and composing the influence of his early studies with Arnold Schoenberg. Among Kirchner's students was Joel Fan who years later asked his former teacher to compose a sonata for him and a consortium of pianists. The result was the short, one-movement work entitled "The Forbidden," which Fan premiered in 2006. The title reflects on a character in Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* who sells his soul to the devil to achieve great prominence as a composer. Being aware that many composers chose new musical forms for previous works, Kirchner turned "The Forbidden" into a string quartet (2006) and then supplied an orchestral version of "The Forbidden" for James Levine and the Boston Symphony in 2008. So one became three. One critic proposed that "the work derives a sweeping power from its distinctive fusion of atonal and tonal

languages, its struggle between lyrical repose and unbridled animation." Indeed the quiet central portion contrasts effectively with later bursts of energy.

George Gershwin (1898-1937) **Rhapsody in Blue (1924)**

In December, 1923, a busy George Gershwin was completing the score for a new Broadway musical while starting work on an "American Rhapsody." This was his name for a piano/orchestra work commissioned by Paul Whiteman and his Palais Royal orchestra. Whiteman, the so-called "King of Jazz," had viewed Gershwin far more than just a popular song melodist of the day ("Swanee," "Somebody Loves Me") and wanted a significant composition from him for a concert titled "An Experiment in American Music." On January 4, 1924, brother Ira read to George an item in the New York Tribune stating that the Whiteman concert had been advanced in date to February 12. A frantic George completed the rhapsody in three weeks and Ira, on hearing the result, suggested it be called Rhapsody in Blue. Too busy to do the orchestration, Gershwin gave Ferde Grofé, Whiteman's orchestrator, a two-piano arrangement to work from and on a snowy Lincoln's birthday in Aeolian Hall on 43rd Street, Gershwin and Whiteman's orchestra introduced the work that would make Gershwin internationally famous.

There is a "Gershwin Arrangement" of the Rhapsody in Blue for solo piano. But did Gershwin actually create this arrangement? Several Gershwin biographers state that it was the composer Vernon Duke ("April in Paris," "Autumn in New York") who did the arrangement at Gershwin's request and for which he was paid 100 dollars. It was very much like the generous Gershwin to help Duke in this way for the young man had arrived from Russia only two years before with his given name of Vladimir Dukelsky; Gershwin took him under his wing and also suggested Vladimir's name change. For this concert Joel Fan has indicated that the "Gershwin Arrangement" for solo piano is the basis of his performance.

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DCA Sample 7: The String Orchestra of New York City May 2, 2015

Comment: Not every concert may provide that germ of an idea for a prologue. In this concert, though the composers represented on this program are famous enough, interesting side issues of each composer are discovered and emphasized, e.g. the earliest symphonies of Mendelssohn and the film music of Shostakovich.

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Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767)	**Don Quixote Suite**
Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)	**Impromptu for Strings; Romance, Op. 42**
Bela Bartok (1881-1945)	**Romanian Folk Dances**
Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)	**String Symphony No. 10**
Edward Elgar (1857-1934)	**Introduction and Allegro**
Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)	**"Spanish Dance"**

Georg Philip Telemann (1681-1767) Don Quixote Suite

Georg Philipp Telemann, as a youth, fought against his parents pushing him toward a law career. Instead he veered off to become a musician and composer, a friend and rival to Johann Sebastian Bach. After many musical assignments throughout Germany, he became the music director of Hamburg's five largest Protestant churches at age 40. There he spent the rest of what must have been a hyperactive life composing 1043 church cantatas, 46 settings of the Passion, 32 operas and countless instrumental works. No shirker he.

One of his operas was *Don Quixote*, utilizing episodes from the great Cervantes novel. The "woeful knight" has inspired numerous works including the tone poem by Richard Strauss, the ballet with music by Ludwig Minkus, and songs by Maurice Ravel. But it is Telemann's *Don Quixote Suite*, music from his opera that remains the earliest of

these musical pictures and an excellent one at that. After a brisk overture in the French style, comes the quiet, pensive "Awakening of Don Quixote." Now comes the musical ferocity of "His Attack on the Windmills," the famed episode when Quixote perceives the rotating arms as attacking giants. In a quiet episode, a repetitive two-note "Sighs of Love" evidences Quixote's infatuation with his "princess" Dulcinea, the farm-girl who is his imagined mistress. Next "Sancho Panza is swindled," as the knight's squire is the recipient of roughing-up by the owners of the inn that Quixote had left without paying. (Does one hear the braying of Panza's donkey?) The pair's departure for new adventures is heard with "Quixote galloping on his steed Rosinante" interspersed with the "Galloping of Panza's donkey. The suite ends with "Quixote at Rest," though it appears that the "knight" reflects first on his frantic life before nodding off to sleep.

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957) Impromptu for Strings; Romance, Op. 42

The fame of Jean Sibelius rests upon his orchestral works, especially his seven symphonies and a variety of incidental works on Finnish themes. Trained as a violinist, as a budding composer he tried his hands at a variety of musical forms. In 1893, he composed six impromptus for piano (Opus 5) and a year later he arranged two of the impromptus for string orchestra. From the very first notes, the Sibelius "touch" is evident in a theme that suggests the beautiful gloom of a Finnish winter, the loneliness, the isolation. But wait! A brisk waltz releases a folk-song of happiness. Yet, the sense of loneliness is not to be denied as the music fades away in sadness. (Yes, there is a sense of his famed *Valse Triste* in this work's structure.)

The Sibelius *Romance* was written directly for string orchestra and completed a year before his violin concerto. The term "romance" implies a lyrical flow of simplicity. Here Sibelius's mastery of writing is clearly evident in the melodic flow from beginning to end. Never one to overstay his welcome, Sibelius nonetheless leaves behind a unique sense of uncluttered beauty.

Bela Bartok (1881-1945) Romanian Folk Dances

Though Bela Bartok was born in the Hungary of pre-WWI, realignments of borders after "The Great War" made him a Romanian. But all the Balkan countries were ripe with cultures whose music had unique folk qualities whether Hungary, Romania, Transylvania or Serbia. A young Bartok became infatuated with the folk music from this region. At 21 years of age and already a well-known pianist and some-time composer, he began a ten-year gathering of folk songs through journeys of the area. At times he was accompanied by his friend Zoltan Kodaly, soon to be another famed composer, as they recorded songs from native singers on a cylinder recorder. The region of Transylvania (notable as the setting for the novel *Dracula*) was particularly rich in the thousands of melodies that Bartok noted in his travels.

The Romanian Folk Dances were written first for piano in 1915, then orchestrated in 1922. The six pieces are short, with the first four of a more restrained nature, and the final two bursting forth. Though the melodies have a certain innate simplicity, Bartok gave each his own harmonic touch. As historian János Kárpáti put it, Bartók "made fast dances even faster and the slow ones even slower." The opening "Stick dance" is highly punctuated. (Bartok heard it first played by two gypsy violinists). The following "Sash dance" is short and brisk, then a slow-down for "Pe loc" (a type of stamping dance). The "Horn dance" (from the region of Bucsum) remains slow, but then the "Romanian polka" livens up the scene, preparing for the final "Fast dance," actually composed of two melodies and an *allegro vivace* tempo. In such a brief work, what a glorious sense of a unique part of Europe.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) String Symphony No. 10

The famed pianist Alfred Brendel once said that "Mozart was not the teenage genius that Mendelssohn was." How true. For example, nothing that teenage Mozart wrote persists in standard orchestral repertoire as does 17-year old Felix's masterpiece, Overture to a *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Music cascaded from the brain of the young Felix. Performing as a pianist by age 9, he began studies in composition by age 10. In his thirteenth year alone, he composed five concertos, a three-act opera entitled *The Uncle from Boston*, and six of the dozen String Symphonies

he wrote over two years. (Incidentally, these symphonies were only re-discovered in a Berlin library after World War Two.)

Felix was the descendant of several generations of the family that was central to Germany's arts and letters. He and his beloved sister Fanny, four years older than her brother and also both pianist and composer, were the center of Sunday afternoon cultural events sponsored by the family in their Berlin home. Not only would the teenage couple perform on pianos, but sometimes would perform portions from Shakespeare plays. Also, whenever Felix had completed one of his new symphonies, string players would be invited to the home to perform it. The String Symphonies were written as exercises for his teacher Carl Zelter, who grounded young Felix in the composers of the Baroque and Classical eras. Many have the typical four movement structure of the classical symphony and are the length of a Haydn symphony. But the Symphony No. 10 is in one movement. Still it provides remarkable mood changes in its ten minutes, from a Bach-like *adagio* to a Haydn-like "Sturm und Drang" *allegro.* What follows has the scherzo-like quality that would in future years be a trademark of Mendelssohn's style. A brisk *piu presto* finale leaves the listener musically reeling, not to mention the players.

Edward Elgar (1857-1934) Introduction and Allegro

Like Sibelius, Edward Elgar, the last and greatest of the English Victorian composers, had particular love for the violin, his first learned instrument. Largely self-taught as a composer, his normal way of composing included combining themes that he had jotted down in sketchbooks, often years before, just waiting for the right work to use them. The *Introduction and Allegro*, published in 1905 and specially written for the newly formed London Symphony, assembles five different themes in ways that makes it a masterpiece of variety. The Introduction portion begins with a noble fanfare theme, and within a few minutes, a solo viola presents a simple, beautiful theme that is the heart of the work: Elgar had heard a choir sing the melody in a visit to Wales, a theme he will use five times in the fifteen minute work. The Allegro portion is introduced by a pulsating theme that will connect to what Elgar himself called "a devil of a fugue." Following, all the themes are further recapitulated in dramatic form leading to a triumphant coda of the Welsh theme and a conclusion with an unexpected pizzicato chord!

Let us not overlook that that this masterpiece for strings has a bit of the Nutmeg State attached to it. At the 1905 commencement of Yale University, Sir Edward Elgar was presented with an honorary degree by the university. His host and sponsor was Professor Samuel Sanford, a musician who had been a champion of Elgar's music in the United States. When he returned to London, a most grateful Elgar dedicated his soon-to-be published *Introduction and Allegro* to Sanford.

Oh, by the way, at that Yale commencement the graduates marched to Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance March, No. 1, for the first time at any such ceremony in this country.

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) "Spanish Dance"

Dmitri Shostakovich, educated to the piano at home by his mother, suffered through the early years of the Russian Revolution, studied under Glazanouv at the Leningrad Conservatory, and often found poverty staring him in the face. When he was sixteen, his father died of pneumonia and young Dmitri found work playing piano to accompany silent films. His relationship with films would lead to a role as composer of film scores, first for silent films, then for sound films. But this was a sideline for his work writing symphonies and operas, which often ran a roller-coaster of approval and disapproval from Stalin and his newspaper mouthpiece, Pravda. But with Stalin's death in 1955, the "thaw" relaxed pressure on the composer and he gained increased approval in Russia, helped by the film score he composed for the extremely popular movie, *The Gadfly*, released in 1955.

The movie was based on a novel of that name about revolution and revolutionaries in Italy during the 1800s, a time known as the Risorgimento, when the various Italian kingdoms started the ultimate unification. The novel had great success in Russia, a real "best seller," so the movie had a pre-set audience. Shostakovich's music for the film was transformed by another composer, Levon Atovmian, into a popular 12-movement suite for full orchestra. The

"People's Holiday" segment from the *Gadfly Suite* was especially festive, and when later arranged for string orchestra, the name changed to "Spanish Dance." Although this writer finds it no more Spanish than Italian in its rhythms, you can't deny its buoyancy.

DCA Sample 8: A Far Cry with guest artist David Shifrin May 20, 2018

Comment: Sometimes the question comes to mind: What spurred the work to be written? This became the basis for a prologue to the conductor-less Far Cry's program and indeed each of the Mozart, Copland and Britten works have an interesting story to tell.

==========W. A. Mozart (1756-1791) Serenata Notturna, K. 239 (1776)
Aaron Copland (1901-1999) Clarinet Concerto (1948)
Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge (1937)

Why do composers compose? Aaron Copland in his book What to Listen For in Music gave a simple answer:

"The layman always finds it hard to realize how natural it is for a composer to compose…He forgets that composing to a composer is like fulfilling a natural function. It is like eating or sleeping…The composer does not say to himself: 'Do I feel inspired?' He says to himself: 'Do I feel like composing today?' And if he feels like composing, he does"

But there is no doubt that the inspiration to compose is helped along by a little sustenance that comes from the money of a commission. In fact, all three of today's works had such a beginning:

Mozart's serenade had a sponsor (though unknown to us) for a winter gathering in Salzburg;

Copland was approached by Benny Goodman, to prepare a concerto to expand the "King of Swing's" abilities into the classical field;

Britten's friend Boyd Neel needed a new work to be played by his string orchestra for a festival in Salzburg in 1937.

W. A. Mozart (1956-1791) Serenata Notturna, K. 239 (ca. 1775)
Marcia Maestoso; Menuetto (Trio)----Rondeau; Allegretto

For 19 year-old Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, the year 1775 began in Munich with his father Leopold and sister Nannerl and away from their home base in Salzburg. Though they were enjoying the pre-Lenten carnival (both father and son loved dancing and the good food), they were there for another reason: young Mozart had been asked to provide a new opera as a carnival highlight, which would be the three-act *opera giocosa*, La Finta Giardiniera. The musical abilities of the young man were well known for he had already written some 200 compositions of varied types from church music to sonatas to chamber music to dramatic works (including other 3-act operas). Christian Schubart, famed poet and trained musician, heard the opera and wrote to a friend: "Flames of genius flashed here and there [but] if Mozart is not a forced hothouse plant, he will certainly become one of the greatest composers of music who ever lived." It is likely that Schubart was well aware of how Leopold had pushed his talented son in trips throughout Europe from early youth, exhibiting him almost as a musical freak.

Once back in Salzburg, the demands on young Mozart continued: church music for the Archbishop of Salzburg and special music for the visit of Hapsburg royalty. His own talents sometimes made demands because Mozart, the pianist, had also become a fine violinist, again pushed hard by his father. As a result during 1775 he composed his five violin concertos. Also, the nobility made demands. They employed musicians to entertain indoors or outdoors at parties to give dinner guests a pleasant atmosphere. Mozart was called upon often to write divertimentos or serenades, works comprising 3 to 10 movements, full of

pleasant melodies and a variety of dance rhythms. Strings and winds made up the ensembles, from a trio to small orchestra. He would write some two dozen divertimenti and serenades in his Salzburg years.

The Serenata Notturna (yes, a bit duplicitous for "serenade" is an "evening song" and "notturna" means "at night") was completed in January, 1776, for an unknown nobleman and likely for a pre-Lenten party. The work features a string quartet playing against a larger group of strings and drums. Certainly with the distinctive sound of the timpani, it was not meant for dozing. (Did Mozart ever give another timpanist such a starring role?) The Serenata begins with a march (elegant rather than spirited), a central minuet, and then a final rondo. Mozart would write a more famous serenade years later in Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, but this Serenata outdoes it in robustness. And you just can't forget those drums!

Aaron Copland (1901-1999) Clarinet Concerto (1948)

How fascinating to know that Aaron Copland, the composer that best represents American classical music of the 20th century, lived through the whole century himself. At the time of Copland's death, Anthony Tommasini, chief music critic for the New York Times, wrote: "Before Copland came along, we didn't have an "American" style of classical music -- a kind of music that you heard and knew, immediately, that an American had written it. Copland created that style out of his own imagination. It's an amalgam of the jumpy, angular rhythms of jazz; a "wide-open" style of harmony; a bright, uncluttered instrumental palette; and a remarkable gift for melody ." From his early modernist/dissonant work, Copland's music evolved to represent America's beauty of place and spirit (e.g. ballets such as Appalachian Spring or Rodeo), and film scores of great lyricism and emotion (as those for Our Town and The Heiress). Then there were the works such as the Piano Concerto and the Clarinet Concerto that his early protégé Leonard Bernstein spoke of as having the energy of New York city and of jazz.

The Clarinet Concerto was born because of Benny Goodman. The fame of the "King of Swing" was secured in the 1930s, especially with the famed 1938 Carnegie Hall "swing" concert. Still Goodman had eclectic musical interests and found great interest in extending his abilities. That same year he had recorded Mozart's Clarinet Quintet with the Budapest Quartet and realized his clarinet "jazz" sound needed to be "classicized," so he began further studies with clarinet teachers. Because of a paucity of clarinet works in the classical repertoire, Goodman began commissioning works from famous composers. Goodman's friendship with Hungarian violinist Joseph Szegeti led to Bela Bartok (Szegeti's friend) writing Rhapsody (now titled Contrasts) for clarinet, violin and piano. Goodman was back on the stage of Carnegie Hall in 1939, this time performing the Bartok work. In 1941, Darius Milhaud agreed to write a concerto for Goodman. Once written, Goodman never played it. Mitchell Lurie, famed clarinetist and knowledgeable of the situation, stated: "It was not too hard for Benny, but you know the Milhaud. It's a non-stop piece of music with no place to take a breath, and Benny just didn't like it." Goodman followed with commissions to Paul Hindemith and Alex North, both of whose works did not sit well with critics when performed.

Goodman finally looked to Copland. Perhaps he had been impressed by the premiere of Copland's Third Symphony in 1947, for he contacted him shortly after and an agreement was reached for a clarinet concerto. "I made no demands on what Copland should write," Goodman later wrote. "He had completely free rein, except that I should have a two-year exclusivity on playing the work. I paid two thousand dollars and that's real money." Copland began writing the concerto during a time in 1947 he was in Brazil and thentook over a year to complete it when back in New York. Goodman sought a few changes and delayed the premiere until November 1950, when he played it on a radio broadcast of the NBC Symphony, conducted by Fritz Reiner

The Clarinet Concerto is in the unusual form of only two movements, accented by harp and piano. The concerto expresses the Copland of "bittersweet lyricism" in the first movement (to be played "Slowly and expressively,") and the Copland of jazz elements in the "Rather fast" second movement (including some Latin-jazz as well). A virtuosic clarinet cadenza links the two and initiates the energy for the concertos conclusion. What goes on between the concerto's very first notes, plucked by the harpist, and the final notes, a joyful clarinet glissando, is masterful Copland.

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) Op. 10 Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge (1937)
I: Adagio II: March III: Romance IV: Aria Italiana V: Bouree Classique
VI: Wiener Waltz VII: Moto Perpetuo VIII: Funeral March IX: Chant X: Fugue and Finale

As Aaron Copland was central to American classical music of the 20th century, so was Benjamin Britten to British classical music. From his first opus, a Sinfonietta at age of 18, he wrote music for 45 years, with a special talent for vocal music (such as the well-known Ceremony of Carols), important operas such as Peter Grimes, Billy Budd and Midsummers Night Dream and the masterpiece of anti-war sentiment: War Requiem. The total result of his years is nicely summarized in the appellation: "Great Britain's great Britten."

But it was not vocal music that first brought Britten world-wide attention, but today's Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge, a work that would musically link the composer forever to his first important teacher and mentor, Frank Bridge. In the 1920s, Frank Bridge was a well-known progressive British composer whose orchestral suite The Sea "bowled over" a ten-year old Britten at one of the first concerts he ever attended. A few years later and already setting notes to staves, a teenage Britten was introduced to Bridge who agreed to be his mentor and help develop the youth's compositional talent. Though he would study with other teachers, Britten's appreciation to his longtime mentor is found in the Variations' dedication:
"To F.B.--A tribute with affection and admiration."

Here's how the Variations came to be. From 1935 to 1937, Britten had composed scores for dozens of movies. Boyd Neel, who had established the excellent Boyd Neel Orchestra, was the conductor for some of the film scores written by Britten and was deeply impressed by Britten's music. So when, with short notice, Neel's orchestra was invited to perform at the Salzburg Festival in 1937, he contacted Britten because Salzburg demanded a new work by a British composer be on their program. Britten readily agreed to provide it and in a three-month whirlwind, he produced the Bridge Variations.

The theme that Britten chose came from Bridges' Three Idylls, a string quartet of 1906, and is not of the type that is immediately hummable. At the beginning , It is presented quietly, somewhat mysteriously, after a minute of attention-grabbing fanfare. Then ten variations roll forth. The intention of Britten was for each variation to represent a quality of Bridge's personality. For example, the dark and passionate "Adagio" represents Bridge's "integrity" while the following "March" his "energy." Britten's cleverness in the variations appears in imitation of other composers, such as a Rossini-like charm in "Aria Italiana." And what of the slightly off-kilter Straussian "Wiener Waltz" or the somber, somewhat Wagnerian "Funeral March"? A multi-part fugue brings the work to an end, but not before a strong evocation again of the Bridge theme. Britten seems to know how not to overstay a welcome in each of the variations, but didn't you wish he would have made that "Aria Italiana" a few minutes longer?