Program Notes Written by James Pegolotti for Concerts by the Danbury Concert Association from April 20, 1996 to October 20, 2019. A total of 60 programs.

Alpha List by Composer III: Franz Danzi to Charles Ives

Franz Danzi (1763-1826) ***Quartet in B-flat major for bassoon and strings, Op. 40/3***

The years of Franz Danzi's life saw the transition from the late Classical period to the early Romantic. It was a time when the Germanic world of royalty still maintained orchestras in their courts and "Kapellmeisters" were in charge of the court music and very often were composers themselves. We could say that at this time of musical development composers fell into what were the "A team,' such as Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Boccherini, Salieri, and the "B team," composers such as Danzi and hundreds of others that practiced their trades through the goodness of royalty or the Church. The son of a noted Italian cellist, Danzi himself became an excellent cellist and served as first cellist in the famed Mannheim orchestra of Elector Karl Theodor. It was the Elector who commissioned Mozart's opera Idomeneo, and Mozart, himself, congratulated Danzi for his playing at the opera's premiere. Danzi would later serve as Kapellmeister in courts in Munich, then Stuttgart, providing the opportunity to compose works that included woodwinds.

This bassoon quartet has all the pleasures of the energy and melody of its musical period. The four movements provide interesting conversations between the bassoon and the strings. In the first movement, the bassoon quickly lets the strings know it plans to be the centerpiece, while in the lullaby-like second movement the bassoon takes more of a secondary role. The ABA form of the minuet third movement has the bassoon counterpointing at beginning and ending, but takes over in the central portion. For the joyful jaunt of the fourth, the extreme playfulness of the bassoon seems to energize each of the strings for a charming conclusion.

Walden Chamber Players March 24, 2019

Claude Debussy (1862-1918) **L'Isle Joyeuse**

"Love" is the subject of Jean-Antoine Watteau's painting, "L'Embarquement de Cythere" (1717), the inspiration for Debussy's L'Isle Joyeuse. In the painting, elegant French men and women in colorful dress are posed on a small hill overlooking water. They are in the process of arriving (or are they leaving?) this island of Cythere, the birthplace of Venus, whose statue on the pinnacle of the hill is enshrouded in flowers. In the French Rococo tradition, cherubs fly about, trying to decide which of the couples need help. A listener never having seen the painting might hear in L'Isle Joyeuse leftover portions of La Mer, the composer's depiction of the moods of the sea. The shimmering treble notes and rolling chords give a watery effect, but there are also horn calls, perhaps summoning the cherubs to their duties. Whatever Debussy's musical impression provides to the listener, there's love in the air.

Santiago Rodriguez, piano October 15, 2000

Claude Debussy (1862-1918) Cello Sonata (1915)

From a poor French family and with a meager education, an 8-year-old Claude Debussy was given piano lessons by Mme. Antoinette Mauté, the mother-in-law of the poet Paul Verlaine, whose poems years later Debussy would set to music. Mauté, who claimed to have been taught by Chopin, recognized the unusual in the young man's piano playing and managed to gain him entrance into the elite Paris Conservatoire at age 10. For a dozen years he studied piano and

composition, becoming an excellent pianist. Concurrently, he developed a great interest in French literature and painting such that his first compositions were songs with the poetry of Frenchmen as their base. As for orchestral works, his teachers soon found he did not like to follow the musical rules of composition passed down from the time of Bach. The symphonic form did not interest him. Instead he sought to create new approaches, with rhythmic and key change flexibility that ultimately brought the term "impressionism" as a description of his works. He loved for the piano to create what his mind imagined, such as in "Claire de Lune," inspired by a Verlaine poem. He produced similarly emotive works for orchestra, notably the "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun" (to a poem by Stephen Mellarmé) and the symphonic poem "La Mer" (from Debussy's own mental sea pictures.) And then the landmark opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* based on the play by Maurice Maeterlinck. And so much more.

By the start of World War I, Debussy was recognized as the great modern French composer, but he would be dealt a severe blow when struck with colon cancer in 1915. His final three years were difficult. He chose to compose chamber works in the time left him: duos or trios, works normally created in the early years of a composer's education. Planning on six sonatas, he completed only three: Flute, Viola and Harp Sonata, Violin Sonata and Cello Sonata.

Great variety is found in his Cello Sonata, though only about 11 minutes in length. In the Prologue, after a brief piano fanfare, the cello provides a theme not unlike a sense of lament that could be from a baroque opera. It is in the Serenade and Finale, performed with no break between them, that modernist Debussy emerges full-blown. In the Serenade, some see a jazzy beginning with the cello in a pizzicato mood. Or is it a guitar being plucked as a lover would serenade his beloved? A few measures of quiet lead into the animated finale. Cello and piano here share equal importance, often mirroring each other in themes that almost feel like folk music. The sonata ends in quick, dramatic strokes by piano and cello.

Claude Debussy (1862-1918) Cello Sonata (1915)

From a poor French family and with a meager education, an 8-year-old Claude Debussy was given piano lessons by Mme. Antoinette Mauté, the mother-in-law of the poet Paul Verlaine, whose poems years later Debussy would set to music. Mauté, who claimed to have been taught by Chopin, recognized the unusual in the young man's piano playing and managed to gain him entrance into the elite Paris Conservatoire at age 10. For a dozen years he studied piano and composition, becoming an excellent pianist. Concurrently, he developed a great interest in French literature and painting such that his first compositions were songs with the poetry of Frenchmen as their base. As for orchestral works, his teachers soon found he did not like to follow the musical rules of composition passed down from the time of Bach. The symphonic form did not interest him. Instead he sought to create new approaches, with rhythmic and key change flexibility that ultimately brought the term "impressionism" as a description of his works. He loved for the piano to create what his mind imagined, such as in "Claire de Lune," inspired by a Verlaine poem. He produced similarly emotive works for orchestra, notably the "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun" (to a poem by Stephen Mellarmé) and the symphonic poem "La Mer" (from Debussy's own mental sea pictures.) And then the landmark opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* based on the play by Maurice Maeterlinck. And so much more.

By the start of World War I, Debussy was recognized as the great modern French composer, but he would be dealt a severe blow when struck with colon cancer in 1915. His final three years were difficult. He chose to compose chamber works in the time left him: duos or trios, works normally created in the early years of a composer's education. Planning on six sonatas, he completed only three: Flute, Viola and Harp Sonata, Violin Sonata and Cello Sonata.

Great variety is found in his Cello Sonata, though only about 11 minutes in length. In the Prologue, after a brief piano fanfare, the cello provides a theme not unlike a sense of lament that could be from a baroque opera. It is in the Serenade and Finale, performed with no break between them, that modernist Debussy emerges full-blown. In the Serenade, some see a jazzy beginning with the cello in a pizzicato mood. Or is it a guitar being plucked as a lover would serenade his beloved? A few measures of quiet lead into the animated finale. Cello and piano here share equal importance, often mirroring each other in themes that almost feel like folk music. The sonata ends in quick, dramatic strokes by piano and cello.
Andrew Armstrong, piano, Tessa Lark, violin, Raman Ramakrishman, cello Sept. 15, 2019

Claude Debussy (1862-1918) Suite Bergamasque
Bergamo, Italy, a hilly city some 30 miles east of Milan, is a major center in the development of the "commedia dell'arte" of the 16th century. For this, actors represented stock characters by the use of masks and colorful outfits, for example the clown "Arlecchino (Harlequin)" and the adventurer "Scaramuccia (Scaramouche)." These engaging characters later were transformed into "Punch and Judy" in England, with "Punch" derived from "Pulcinella," the persistent chaser of women. The characters often were simply referred to as "masks," thus the "Bergamo masks" or "Bergamasques." Debussy's Suite Bergamasque provides four musical impressions of this comedic theatrical world. The most famous section, "Clair de lune," was inspired by the poem of the same name written by Paul Verlaine (1844-1896). The "commedia dell'arte" emerges in the first lines of the poem: "*Your soul is a chosen landscape*
Where charming masked and costumed figures stroll."
In the original French, the second line is: "*Que vont charmant masques et bergamasques*."
Orli Shaham, piano April 24, 2004

Manuel de Falla (1876-1946)
***Four Spanish Pieces*: Aragonesa, Cubana, Montañesa, Andaluza**
Fantasia Bætica
Manuel de Falla, though now considered the 20th century's premiere Spanish composer, in the 1940s, seemed to be the composer of one piece and one piece only: "The Ritual Fire Dance." The piano transcription of that dance from the ballet *El Amor Brujo* was a specialty of two of the most famous pianists of their time: José Iturbi (seen often in MGM musicals) and Artur Rubenstein. On radio, you heard it often; in concerts, it was an expected encore. But today's program presents the key works by Falla written specifically for piano: the *Four Spanish Pieces* (1906) and *Fantasia Bætica* (1919).

Born into a musical family on the seacoast town of Cadiz in Andalusia, he studied in Madrid with Felipe Pedrell, the teacher and musicologist who urged his students to develop a stronger Spanish nationalism in their music. Why, he would say one supposes, should other country composers be more famous for "Spanish music," such as Frenchman Georges Bizet (*Carmen*) and Russian Rimsky-Korsakov (*Capriccio Espagnol*)? Pedrell had also taught Isaac Albeniz

(1860-1909) and Enrique Granados (1867-1916), both of whom had followed their teacher's lead, mainly through piano compositions, into a world of "real" Spanish music. Falla also continued this direction and completed the *Four Spanish Pieces* in his Paris years of study and dedicated it to Albeniz. He had come under some Debussy influence and there may be a French flavor in the four pieces, but Spanish they are without a doubt. In them Falla inculcated Andalusian influences, such as gypsy and flamenco, the latter with its Arabic influence. These four brief works are not of the rambunctious, castenet-clicking type, but more reflective, almost bucolic in their sensitivities.

Not so the *Fantasia Bætica,* his last piano composition. Bætica is the ancient Roman name for the Andalusian segment of the Iberian peninsula and Falla insisted on the use of the diphthong (æ) to emphasize that. The work was commissioned and dedicated to Artur Rubenstein, who did not find it to his liking and performed it rarely. (He complained it had too many glissandos!) The *Fantasia* literally seems to turn the piano into a guitar and features aspects of the Andalusian "cante jondo" (the "deep song") effectively the earthiness of flamenco singers. The piano "plucks" and "strums" as a guitar, and mood changes occur quickly from calm to the near violent. ***Alex Alguacil, piano September 26, 2010***

Manuel de Falla (1876-1946) Ritual Fire Dance

The "Ritual Fire Dance" is an exercise in musical frenzy. Arguably Manuel de Falla's most famous composition, this dance from the 1915 ballet "El Amor Brujo" ("Love, the Magician") provides a gypsy girl, with the opportunity to exorcise herself from the ghost of her former husband, while whirling around a blazing fire. It was the great pianist Artur Rubenstein (1887-1982) who took Falla's own arrangement of the dance for piano, augmented it with judicious bravura notes in the conclusion and turned it into a sensation. At the first concert he performed the work, "the audience went wild," Rubenstein said, "and I had to repeat it three times."
From his studies in France and impressionist composers, Falla developed a style that took Spanish music to a higher level of color and harmony. Though Falla first arranged the "Fire" dance for chamber orchestra, it was the piano version that became one of the best known classical works of the 20th century through its programming by the pianists Rubenstein and Spanish-born Jose Iturbi (1895-1980). The latter actually became a movie star in some six MGM musicals, in several of which he performed the Falla work in grandiose style.
The beginning, a buzzing tremolando, quickly takes on a haunting repetitive theme. Then a quiet segment of pure rhythm suddenly bursts into fortissimo pulsating chords of Oriental exoticism. Ever advancing in urgency, the dance concludes with massive octaves and a final downward collapse that suggests the gypsy's purpose of destroying the ghost of her dead husband has been achieved. In fact, it hasn't, but you'd have to sit through the rest of the ballet to find that out.

Trio Solisti April 3, 2011

Manuel de Falla (1876-1946) Three-Cornered Hat (original version)

If the Capriccio Espagnol is Spain viewed musically through Russian eyes of Tchaikovsky, the Three-Cornered Hat is the real thing—Spain distilled through the mind of a great Spanish composer, Manuel de Falla. As a young man he first embroiled himself in Spanish traditions by composing zarzuelas, Spain's musical operetta form that blends music with spoken words. Later he spent time in Paris, acquainted with composers such as Ravel and Debussy, and

developed a style incorporating Spanish melodies into a rich orchestral palette. He returned to Spain during World War I and by 1917 had become well known for two works, Noches en los jardines de España (Nights in the Gardens of Spain) and the ballet El amor brujo (Love the Sorcerer).

In 1917 he composed music for a pantomime presentation of El Corregidor y la Molinera (The Corregidor and the Miller's Wife). This stage work was an adaptation of El sombrero de tres picos (The Three-Cornered Hat), a novelette by Pedro de Alarcon. The story is simple: the corregidor, the town magistrate whose three-cornered hat is the symbol of his authority, has eyes on the miller's wife. The resulting action provides the traditional comedy plot of peasants outwitting authority. De Falla's music for The Corregidor and the Miller's Wife was performed by a chamber group of seventeen instrumentalists and came to the attention of Sergey Dyagilev. The great ballet impresario was then touring Spain with his Russian Ballet. He asked de Falla to expand the pantomime music into a ballet; the resulting Three-Cornered Hat premiered in London in 1919 and would become de Falla's most famous orchestral work. De Falla used Spanish folk music incidentally in the ballet music, but the main dances, such as that of the miller and the miller's wife, are artistic creations of the composer.

The New York Chamber Ensemble April 6, 2002

Vincent d'Indy (1851-1931) Sarabande and Minuet

Vincent d'Indy was taught by Cesar Franck, a great teacher and composer. D'Indy followed in these footsteps becoming a fine composer and great teacher. (He co-founded the influential Schola Cantorum.) Today, about the only major work of d'Indy's that remains in the repertoire is "Symphony on a French Mountain Air," a fresh, often jaunty, composition for piano and orchestra. Some of that sprightliness is found in the Minuet, while the Sarabande, true to the nature of this baroque dance form, is more staid and elegant.

Borealis Wind Quintet with Leon Bates, piano November 9, 2003

Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904) Cypresses for String Quartet
"Death Reigns in Many a Human Breast"
"When Thy Sweet Glances on Me Fall"
"Nature Lies Peaceful in Slumber and Dreaming"
"Thou Only Dear One, But For Thee"
"You Ask Why My Songs"

Ah, first love!!! For Antonin Dvořák, Josefina Cermakova, one of his piano students, was definitely "it." How else to explain why this 23-year old (O.K. First love was a little late) would write 18 songs over just two weeks extolling the joys and pains of youthful love? The basis for the songs was a cycle of Romantic poems entitled "Cypresses" by the Czech poet Gustav Pfleger-Moravsky; themes of unrequited love, death, and nature pervaded. Just the fact that the cycle was named for the cypress tree, long a symbol of both sadness (Greek myth) as well as resurrection (Christian thought), provides an insight. Dvorak at that time of writing the songs was blossoming as a composer, having already written several symphonies and even an opera. Though he had longed for Josefina, she did not reciprocate his feelings, so Dvorak married her sister and their marriage was blessed with six children. Yet Josefina, now his sister-in-law, remained close to his heart. At the time he was composing his great cello concerto, she was

terminally ill and Dvorak incorporated the melody of a favorite song of hers into both the second movement and finale.
Dvorak transcribed 12 of his cypress songs into string quartet form 22 years after composing the songs. By this time he was a mature composer. The five "Cypresses" chosen for today's concert illustrate the variety and beauty of Dvorak's original intentions. The "Death" that reigns in the first Cypress is both questioning in urgency, but ultimately comforting. The "Glances" that fall in the second Cypress are in a major key and happily received by the youthful recipient. In the third, the sparkling joy and vivacity suggests that "Mother Nature" isn't having nightmares while dreaming. For "Thou only…" Dvorak invests the warmer aspects of strings in a lengthy arioso melody. The fifth Cypress is actually the final one of the twelve-part cycle, so we may surmise that the mood projected is the one that Dvorak deeply felt: one of questioning life, but ultimately relenting into serenity.
The Lark Quintet with Gary Graffman, piano November 12, 2011

Antoni Dvorak (1841-1904) Nocturne for String Orchestra, Op. 40
What do you do if you are a composer who finds himself with an extra movement from a string quintet? If you are Dvorak, you score it for string orchestra and publish it separately. Dvorak's String quintet in G major originally was a five-movement work with
two slow movements, one too many in the composer's final judgment. So he removed the Intermezzo movement and transformed it. The resulting Nocturne has a lyrical sweep of short melodic bits, always with a sense of upward movement. Toward the end, a constant bass pulsation carries the Nocturne to a calm and peaceful conclusion.
I Musici di Montreal October 15, 1995

Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904) Piano Trio in E Minor, Op 90 "Dumky"
Dvorak's inspired "Dumky" trio was premiered in Prague in 1891 with the composer at the piano. So successful was the premiere that he initiated a concert tour throughout his Czech homeland using his new trio as the centerpiece of the programs. "Dumky" is the plural of the word "dumka," from the Slavic verb meaning "to meditate or ponder." Dvorak, in a footnote to the trio, spoke of the word relating to a subject's highly emotional character. Since this piano trio was written after the completion of his Requiem, its elegiac quality may be a leftover of that major effort.
Instead of the traditional four-movements, Dvorak chose to compose six episodes. Each of these begins with a slow, pensive portion that leads to music of unbridled Bohemian joy, though often falling back into a feeling of darkness. As noted by one critic, "The odd combination of dark music side-by-side with bright is curiously satisfying, the elegiac and festive sides of Dvorak's soul flashing out by turns in this intense music."
Each of the six dumkys illustrates Dvorak's "soul flashing." Consider just the first dumka where the strings, in lamenting spirit, struggle against the piano. This quickly gives way to a segment not unlike the furiant of a Slavonic dance. A return to the sadness of the beginning cannot last as the rich gypsy-like theme returns for a fast conclusion. The expressive Dvorak of those amazing Slavonic Dances refuses to be denied. ***Trio Solisti April 3, 2011***

Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904) Piano Trio No. 3 in F Minor, Op. 65

Dvorak's lengthy (some 40-minutes) work provides, in the main, an elegiac tribute to his mother. She had died in 1882, shortly before he began to compose this trio. Sadness was no stranger to Antonin for his first three children had lived short lives, none longer than three years. (Six would follow, each to maturity.) Yet, even in sadness, Dvorak was never happier than when he worked on compositions. Piano trios were his special form of chamber compositions (four published, two thrown into the fire!) and into this one he sank heart and soul, such that the Dvorak expert Hans Hubert Schonzeler wrote of the trio: "There is hardly another work in Dvorak's output so sorrowful, somber and poignant." Many see a Brahmsian tone throughout for Dvorak owed much to the German composer who had supported him from the day Brahms first heard the Slavonic Dances.

The lengthy first movement provides a multitude of moods where "the dynamic range [is] huge, the gestures sweeping, and yet, by turns, soft and shining as well." At times, major keys are used, but only briefly, to lift the heavier mood. The short second movement, a scherzo, is in the style of a Bohemian folk dance. Indeed, Dvorak decided that such a return to his Slavic heartland was needed to contrast effectively with the previous movement and the one to come.

A sorrowful melody in the cello opens the third movement, the "heart" of the piano trio. Dvorak's affection for his mother pervades the music in this movement. Several times the violin provides a soaring melody of great beauty, a musical rose lifted toward the infinite. And Dvorak's strong religious sense will not let the mood ever become despairing. The final movement begins without great fanfare, yet the sense is immediate of a dance rhythm, the Czech "furiant." A lovely waltz theme recurs and heroic musical gestures come and go. Quiet reflection precedes a final burst of energy, which provides a life-affirming conclusion

Brown—Urioste—Canellakis Trio April 2, 2017

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

The Weilerstein Trio April 5, 2003

Edward Elgar (1857-1934) Introduction and Allegro

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.

The String Orchestra of New York City May 2, 2015

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1925) Piano Quartet in C Minor (Op. 15)

Gabriel Fauré is remembered principally for his Requiem. Though not a composer of immense output, Fauré produced works of singular beauty: French songs treasured by concert artists, music to accompany many dramas (e.g. Pelléas et Mélisande), and chamber music such as his two piano quartets. Like César Franck and Camille Saint-Saëns (the latter his teacher) he was an organist of great abilities. He supported his composing by being organist in some of the greatest of Paris churches. His composing years were followed by years of teaching with his students including Maurice Ravel and Nadia Boulanger.

When Fauré began his active composing in the 1870s, the "middle class" was seeking salon music for performance. In 1877, Fauré entered this world with a highly successful violin sonata. Fauré then chose the larger challenge of a piano quartet. Economic difficulties, an aborted engagement (to the daughter of his long-time admirer and supporter, the great French soprano Pauline Viardot), and a finale he finally decided to discard---all created delays so that the quartet took seven years to complete.

The quartet's outer two movements frame an inner two that are among the gems of quartet literature. The first movement begins with unison strings that boldly proclaim the melody over syncopated chords in the piano. A second theme is heard in short graceful measures. The writer J. B. Priestley sees the two themes as "great birds swooping and rising."
The second movement is the essence of gallic wit and charm. It could be what An American in Paris would have sounded like if composed by a Frenchman. The strings are pizzicato; the rhythm alternates from 6/8 to 2/4. A lyrical trio contrasts the ambulatory first theme. The sadness

of the adagio theme of the third movement has suggested to some an elegy for Fauré's lost love, Marianne Viardot. The melody gains in strength by the addition of instruments to the cello. Walter Cobbett, chamber music expert, has stated that "Were this not very long movement to be lost to us, an immeasurable void would be created in the music of the nineteenth century." The fourth movement with three musical subjects reflects the energy of the first movement and provides a full-circle in its ardent conclusion.

The Ames Piano Quartet April 20, 1996

Bernard Garfield (1924-) Quartet for bassoon, violin, viola and cello (1950)

If you were a bassoon, wouldn't you want someone who really knew you well to compose a work for you, such as a man whose whole long life was as a bassoonist? Indeed, a bassoon would be highly pleased by Bernard Garfield's "Quartet for bassoon, violin, viola and cello" for the composer was the man who for 43 years was principal bassoonist for the Philadelphia Orchestra. Born in Brooklyn, "Bernie," to his friends, performed with New York orchestras and founded the New York Wind Quintet, leading it until called to Philadelphia, where he also taught for years at Curtis Institute. His recording of the Mozart Bassoon Concerto with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra remains a benchmark for all bassoonists.

The quartet is less than 14 minutes long and has both a sprightly side and a reflective side, with the third movement as long as both the first two. In the first movement, after a brisk opening, the instruments pursue a sort-of melodic "sauntering down the street" effect. The second movement might be said to be made up of contrasting quiet "agreement" and emphatic "disagreement" between bassoon and strings. The third movement lives up to its "allegro scherzando" notation with the bassoonist showing how the instrument can "repeat notes rapid-fire, sing lyrically and sit comfortably on prominent low notes."

Walden Chamber Players March 24, 2019

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.

Joel Fan, piano September 18, 2011

Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829-1869) Le Banjo, op. 15; Le Bananier, op. 5; Pasquinade, op. 59;

The Dying Poet, Meditation; Union, op. 48

Who would believe that in mid-19th century Europe and during the time of Liszt, Chopin and Berlioz, an American pianist by the name of Louis Moreau Gottschalk would be the talk of musical Europe and particularly Paris? The City of Light had been his home since he was 11, brought there in 1840 from New Orleans by his well-to-do parents who knew they had a child prodigy on their hands. To them--especially his Creole mother----Paris seemed ideal for their son's development. There he was provided excellent piano and composition teachers while gaining social exposure through performing at evening soirees, perceived as a charming young man, fluent in French. And none other than Frederic Chopin would come to extol his abilities, for in Gottschalk's first public concert in Paris in 1846, the 16 year-old soloed in Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1 with Chopin himself in the audience. The composer rushed to him afterwards to proclaim Gottschalk would soon be "king of pianists." Others showered praise, including Hector Berlioz:*: "Mr. Gottschalk is one of the very small number of those who possess all the different elements of the sovereign power of the pianist….his playing strikes from the first, dazzles, astonishes."*

But there were many fine pianists in Europe, so why would he become so famous? The answer is found in what he would introduce to the world in Paris for the first time: music uniquely American.

Gottschalk was born in 1829 in New Orleans to a Jewish businessman and a Creole mother and grew-up absorbing the sounds and rhythms permeating what was then the most musical city in the United States. Nowhere else was there such a meshing of cultures: French, Creole, African and Spanish. Of particular musical importance was Congo Square ("Place de negres") near the French Quarter. There enslaved Africans were allowed to gather on Sunday afternoons and dance to the musical sounds of African-style instruments, such as the bamboula drums (made from rum barrels), gourds and banjos. What Gottschalk heard as a youth, including Creole songs, became the basis for the rhythms and melodies of many of his piano compositions. Among the first written in Paris were four he labeled as "Louisiana Creole." Two of these--- "Bamboula, Danse de negres" and "Le Bananier, Chanson negres"---had sensational receptions when premiered for Parisian audiences in 1850; no one had ever heard such exotic music. Even Queen Isabella of Spain, to whom he had dedicated "Bamboula," requested his presence at court to perform the work for her—and he went.

Returning to the United States in 1853, he began a lifetime of touring, all of it detailed in a journal. His reception from New York to Boston was surprisingly cool, with high brow critics decrying his emphasizing his own works, which they referred to as "salon music." It was "white man's music" from Europe they wanted to hear. But when he performed in New Orleans, he was given a hero's welcome. In addition, the sheet music of his compositions was selling well. Especially successful was "Le Banjo," written the year of his return. Meanwhile, the Chickering piano company of Boston gave Gottschalk two grand pianos and a tuner to accompany him

everywhere in exchange for his being a booster of their product. His travels throughout the Western world would be accompanied by what he referred to as his two “giant mastodons.”

Those pianos would first leave the US when Gottschalk chose to visit and concertize in Cuba for a year. Here he found great fervor for his music, including the production of a “monster concert” with an orchestra of 650 musicians playing his “A Night in the Tropics” symphony. Gottschalk had a strong sense of the Caribbean and the variety of French and Spanish island cultures, for his mother’s family was originally from Haiti. He would choose to spend five years touring Caribbean islands, soaking up the variety of music and composing. Eventually his touring income decreased, forcing him to return to the United States where a manager offered him a concert tour.

I t was now 1862 and the Civil War was in full gear. Though formally a Southerner, he quickly identified with the Northern cause and on the tour, which crossed from Maine to Chicago, he featured his new composition, “L’ Union,” a powerful blending of well-known patriotic tunes. Crowds were large and at one point he performed 33 concerts in 26 days. (For a local touch, the closest he came to Danbury was a concert in Norwalk.) In the spring of 1864 he toured into Washington only to find that President Lincoln and the First Lady were in attendance at one concert. In his journal, Gottschalk irreverently commented*, "Lincoln is remarkably ugly."*

He toured by train everywhere, up to 40,000 miles in one year. *"I live on the railroad,”* he wrote in his journal, *“[and] my home is somewhere between the baggage car [the residence of his two pianos] and the last car of the train””* On one occasion in June 1863, he was jammed aboard a train in Pennsylvania with 2000 frantic people rushing away from Harrisburg as the troops of General Lee were advancing. It was two weeks before Gettysburg.

Just a few days before the Civil War ended in April 1865, Gottschalk decided to test the West and headed to California. His five months in San Francisco and environs proved less than satisfactory, but his reception at a “farewell concert” had such warmth that he decided to stay. But, alas, he found himself accused of inappropriate activity with a young lady from an Oakland girl’s school. (His international reputation for certain proclivities toward women was, in fact, well known.) Threatened to be tarred and feathered, within a few days he embarked on a ship to South America, where for four years he would concertize from Peru to Argentina to Brazil, well received everywhere. He continued to compose including “Pasquinade,” which would become published and appreciated only after his death. The end would come in Rio de Janeiro in December, 1869 at the age of 40, most likely from the results of a burst appendix. Nine months later he would be laid to rest in Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn. It was when his sisters came to claim his belongings in Rio that his journal writings were discovered and later published in 1881 as Notes of a Pianist.

There is no dispute that Gottschalk was the first American composer to introduce music to the world from the melting pot of American cultures. Arguments abound whether his music was a direct predecessor of ragtime, but there is no doubt we would be a much poorer musical country without what he did leave us.

==========

Le Banjo (1853) Gottschalk seeks in this work to mimic the styles of banjo playing he heard as a youth: up-picking and strumming. In the final section, strains of Stephen Foster's "De Camptown Races" add another American touch. (Foster lived concurrently to Gottschalk; 1826-1864)

Le Bananier (The Banana Tree) (1851) This Parisian favorite was based on a Creole tune "En avan' Grenadie" that has an infectious rhythm, not unlike a Creole gavotte.

Pasquinade (1869) One of Gottschalks last compositions, a "Caprice", finds the elements of ragtime rampant from a strong bass line to syncopated melody. Here was the essence of the "Cakewalk," a favorite strutting dance of African-Americans in Congo Square.

The Dying Poet (1864) For the 19th century audience, tunes of a somewhat mournful touch were deeply popular. Gottschalk hit the jackpot with this one as the sheet music flew off the shelves during the Civil War. Later the music would find another use: piano accompaniments for silent film episodes of great sadness**.**

L'Union (1862) Inspired by the patriotic fervor of the Civil War, Gottschalk amalgamated the tunes of "Yankee Doodle," " Hail Columbia," and "The Star Spangled Banner" into an imposing virtuoso work. Incidentally "The Star Spangled Banner" was not yet the national anthem. That came from Congress in 1931.

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.

The International Sejong Soloists October 3, 1999

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 abound (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.

Anne-Marie McDermott, piano November 21, 1999

John Harbison (1938-) "Twilight Music" for Horn, Violin, and Piano (1985)

One of America's most prolific and respected composers, John Harbison perhaps is best known for his Metropolitan Opera-commissioned work: *The Great Gatsby* (1999). A review of his works shows a particular interest in choral works, though he has also written six symphonies, many concertos and chamber works. When asked about his artistic credo" **Harbison** replied: "To make each piece different from the others, to find clear, fresh large designs, to reinvent traditions." Harbison certainly knew of Brahms Horn Trio when he decided to tackle the challenge of that same combination of instruments in "Twilight Music" (1984).

As he stated himself: "The horn and the violin have little in common. Any merging must be *trompe l'oreille* ["fool the ear"]. In this piece, the two meet casually at the beginning and part rather formally at the end. In between, they follow the piano in a *Presto*, which dissolves into the twilight half tones that name the piece." In the "Antiphon" third movement of great simplicity, Harbison notes that "it is the kind of music I am often drawn to, where the surface seems simplest and most familiar."

The four movements are played without pauses. If one considers the work as a conversation by the instruments with one another, the piano often attempts to be a "tie that binds" the lack of

commonality of the violin and French horn. If there is a bravura section for the French horn it certainly is in the second movement, where horn and piano vie enthusiastically for the heart and soul of the listener. Whereas in the pacific "Antiphon," the violin and horn still attempt melodic cohabitation at times. But in the final movement, every instrument returns on its own, with singular statements, as the work dissolves into the twilight.

Trio Valtorna November 18, 2012

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) Sonata in E Flat Major, Hoboken XVI:52

Joseph "Papa" Haydn died 207 years ago, leaving behind 104 symphonies, 23 operas, three oratorios (including his masterpiece "The Creation"), a myriad of quartets and trios and some 60 piano sonatas. In this his final piano sonata (1794) he exhibits such a variety of intensity, rhythm and melody that listeners easily sense the man's genius. For Haydn's earliest sonatas, the instruments of performance were the harpsichord, later followed by the lightly constructed fortepiano. These were instruments whose musical thrust was modest. Only when he left Austria to live in London in the 1790s did he come to hear the new English pianos, sturdier ones with greater resonant sounds and the capacity for rapidly repeated notes.

His final sonata bristles with big chords and brisk passage work no doubt inspired by the sounds produced from these English instruments. In the "Allegro" first movement, Haydn contrasts the lower reaches of the piano with the upper reaches in a playful, yet dramatic method. The middle movement, "Adagio," strides along slowly with melodic beauty. And who else but Haydn could write the initial passages of the "Presto" final movement? First, a few seconds of a quiet, busy tune, then a pause, then the tune again, higher in tone, and again a pause, then a surprise: bombastic bass octaves that drive a flood of treble notes that seem to demand more fingers than a pianist has. Haydn the Humorist rides again! ***Xiayin Wang, piano April 10, 2016***

Franz Josef Haydn (1732-1809) Sonata in F Minor, "Un piccolo divertimento: Variations" Hob: XVII:6

So many composers who choose to delve in the world of variations choose one of their favorite melodies by another composer to work their wonders upon, as in the case of Brahms in the following work. Haydn chose not one, but two themes---and both by him. So much of Haydn's music is joyful that to find in this composition a darker side is somewhat unexpected. But there may be a real human reason: the death of a very close friend. After all, composers are allowed to show their emotions. When Irving Berlin's first wife died only months after their marriage, he wrote the song "When I Lost You." In similar circumstances, shortly before composing this work in 1783, Haydn's special friend Marianne von Genzinger died. Students of Haydn's life believe that she was a late-life flame, someone that lit up a man whose actual marriage was quite unhappy. (He actually dedicated the work to another female, Barbara Ployer, a favorite piano student for whom he wrote many works.)

The first of the two Haydn themes is in F Minor, the second in F Major, and though one might expect a significant difference in the two, there's enough similarity to suggest some connection between them.

The opening measures present the minor theme, somber and somewhat plodding, followed by the major theme, brighter, yet not startling in contrast. In the variations—two each per theme---those of the minor theme remain introspective and chromatic, while those of the major theme are more animated. (In fact the first of the major theme variations is so full of trills as to be labeled "trilling.") After the four variations, the original theme returns exactly as in the first measures, leading to a stormy climax, which calms down until only single notes, like rain drops, persist to the ear. ***Roman Rabinovich, piano October 19, 2014***

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.
The Weilerstein Trio April 5, 2003

Arthur Honegger (1892-1955) Pastorale d'ete
This writer gained his earliest symphonic listening experiences during college years in the early 1950s by attending concerts of the San Francisco Symphony (yes, for 50c in the second row from the stage in the Opera House.) The conductor was French born Pierre Monteux (he who had conducted the world premiere of Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring") and he would often program a modern French composer's work. So it was that I was introduced to Arthur Honegger, of Swiss parentage but Paris born and musically trained there. The work I heard was "Pacific 231," a musical depiction of a three-hundred ton locomotive straining at its initial movements and finally "hurling itself through the night at a speed of 100 miles per hour." Though Honegger would write some three hundred works of all classical types, for most of us, he is an unknown quantity. His oratorio "King David" and orchestral works do make occasional appearances on programs. Honegger, unlike his compatriots Darius Milhaud and Francis Poulenc, resisted the use of "le hot jazz" and Gallic witticisms in his music. "Pastorale d'ete," a 1920 composition, has a beauty of form and sound that is captivating, what might be called romantic impressionism. A summer day begins languidly, first with horns then strings, lightly punctuated with bird calls. Then, after the sun's energy perks up life a bit, nature retreats to placidness as woodwinds and horns comment on the glorious summer day---which musically turns out to be only seven minutes long. Short though the day is, Honegger has proven his worth as a composer to the listener.
A Far Cry May 7, 2011

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.) ***Jupiter Symphony Chamber Payers April 9, 2005***

Charles Ives (1874-1954) "The Alcotts" from the Concord Sonata
"He has, in a sense, been condemned, as T. S. Eliot said of Ben Jonson, by the most perverse of conspiracies---to be much talked about and little heard." Alfred F. Rosa in the article "Charles Ives' Music" (1971)

At the beginning of the 1900s, American classical composers were mainly New Englanders. One important group, known as the "Boston Six," included Edward MacDowell, Amy Beach and Horatio Parker. These composers studied in Germany or had German-trained music teachers here; no wonder their music had a romantic European bent. But Charles Ives, Parker's student at Yale, took a new direction, one that made his music "modern" and "American," even stretching toward dissonance and atonality by pairing one melody against another in his works. Many of those melodies were American hymns or songs of the Civil War learned in his youthful Danbury days from his father, who was a band leader in the Civil War.

After Yale, Ives had to mesh working in his New York insurance business with composing his many songs and symphonic works. Everything he did he attacked with great intensity, and in October 1918, Ives suffered a heart attack. It actually ended his life of composition and began a life of revising and assembling works previously written. The next fifteen years, with his wife Harmony, he was in artistic isolation in his West Redding home. One major project was the "Concord Sonata" based on music composed from 1904 to 1915.

A great admirer of the transcendentalist author Ralph Waldo Emerson, Ives sought to honor him and other authors of that tradition---Nathaniel Hawthorne, Luisa May Alcott and Henry David Thoreau--- all living in Concord, Massachusetts from 1840-1860. The sonata's first New York

performance was in 1938 at Town Hall, where a review by the well-respected critic Lawrence Gilman stated: *This sonata is exceptionally great music--it is, indeed, the greatest music composed by an American, and the most deeply and essentially American in impulse and implication. ...It has passions, tenderness, humor, simplicity, and homeliness [and] a sense of those mysteries that are both human and divine"* Truth be told, the Concord Sonata's difficulties, both to performer and listener, has never made it a favorite in the concert hall.

The shortest and most lyrical of the movements honors the family life of philosopher Bronson Alcott and daughter Luisa May. Ives, in his Essays Before a Sonata, explains what he wished to achieve in this movement*: "[The] memory of that home under the elms—the Scotch songs and the family hymns that were sung at the end of each day…a strength of hope that never gives way to despair – a conviction in the power of the common soul which, when all is said and done, may be as typical as any theme of Concord and its transcendentalists."*

To a first listener, if you think the very first notes are similar to those "knocking of fate" notes from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, you're right. And before long Beethoven's "knock" will be plenty loud. Here is Ives at his cleverest because these notes also were the beginning notes to two hymns of the day: "Missionary Chant" and "Martyn." On their piano, the Alcotts played an arrangement of the symphony and many hymns, so in a typical Ives ploy, he coalesced hymns and Beethoven in just a few notes! Snatches of other tunes may be detected, including, midway, a well-disguised "Loch Lomond," one of the "Scotch" songs. Those Beethoven notes reappear majestically in the penultimate measures, but then quietly, reflectively fade away. Welcome back to Danbury, Mr. Ives. ***Llewellyn Sanchez-Werner, piano*** ***November 13, 2016***