

Antonin Dvorak **(1841–1904)**

Scherzo Capriccioso, Opus 66

Dvorak's father hoped that his son would follow in his footsteps by becoming a butcher. Fortunately for us, Dvorak showed such early talent as a violinist that he was allowed to study music instead—although he did return home to work in the family shop before finally entering the Prague Organ School in 1857. In 1862, Dvorak was named principal viola of the recently founded Provisional Theater, Prague's first Czech theater. It was there, under the direction and profound influence of composer Bedrich Smetana, that Dvorak became smitten with Czech folk music.

While Dvorak's music is often viewed from the perspective of his humble origins, and his homages to native folk music seen as the works of a simple peasant musician, his music is far more complex. Dvorak's love of his musical roots also is strongly informed by Brahms, who was an early champion of Dvorak's work and became a major influence on Dvorak's rapid mastery of Classical structures such as the symphony, concerto, and string quartet. As his compositions became more complex, however, they remained tinged with the rosy glow of Czech folk models. These hybrid compositions remain among his most popular, and include the *Slavonic Dances* (Opus 46), the *Slavonic Rhapsodies*, written in 1878, the *Legends* (Opus 59) of 1881, and *My Home* and *Amid Nature* in 1882. In 1883, Dvorak wrote the *Hussite Overture* and tonight's piece, the *Scherzo Capriccioso*, arguably one of the finest of this prolific period.

“Scherzo” is an Italian word meaning “joke.” Whatever Dvorak's interpretation of the word, this colorful, lighthearted piece certainly has elements of the whimsical, taking us on a symphonic journey that seems, simultaneously, both familiar and unexpected. The journey is rife with twists and turns, but the beauty of the music takes us happily along for the ride.

John Williams **(1932--)**

Solo for Violin and Orchestra, Schindler's List

With more than seventy-five film scores to his credit, John Williams is one of the most prolific composers alive today. His work is seemingly everywhere. Williams also has won a startling array of accolades. He has been nominated for forty-five Academy Awards and won five. He also has received four Golden Globes, seven British Academy Awards, and twenty-one Grammys.

Hired by Columbia Pictures in 1956 as a session pianist, Williams became fascinated with the idea of composing film scores, and was able to work with such accomplished composers as Bernard Hermann, Alfred Newman, and Franz Waxman. His early efforts included scores for such iconic 1960s television shows as *Wagon Train* and *Gilligan's Island*, and his work during this formative period earned him two Emmys. But perhaps

his greatest breakthrough was his collaboration with Steven Spielberg in *Jaws*, where his menacing theme did as much to inspire chills as anything shown on the screen.

As if his film work weren't enough to keep him busy, Williams also served as the conductor of the Boston Pops from 1980 to 1993, a guest conductor with nearly every major symphony orchestra, and a composer of such "serious" music as two symphonies and concertos for trumpet, cello, bassoon, flute, violin, clarinet, and tuba.

In 1993, Williams won an Academy Award, a British Academy award and a Grammy award for what he has called his toughest assignment. When Williams was asked by Spielberg to compose the score for *Schindler's List*, he refused. Williams felt he simply wasn't up to the task. Spielberg persisted. The result is a score that combines, like so many others before it, complex symphonic genius with highly emotive solos and heart-wrenching themes from eastern European and Yiddish folk music. The film opened to international acclaim and is among the American Film Institute's top 10 films of all time.

The film score's violin solo originally was written for, and performed by, legendary Israeli violinist Itzhak Perlman. Some sixteen years after it brought moviegoers to tears, the solo remains an achingly haunting tribute to the millions who died and the few who tried to save them.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart **(1756-1791)**

Clarinet Concerto in A major, K. 622

Mozart was a supreme master of virtually every musical form. His symphonies are part of the core orchestral repertoire; his instrumental and chamber works are highlights of any recital season; and his operas are cornerstones of opera houses throughout the world.

The *Clarinet Concerto in A major* is one of the last pieces of work written by Mozart and, after a long foray into operatic music during the 1780s, his last purely instrumental work. The concerto, which features a refined and subtle interplay between the soloist and orchestra, originally was written for Anton Stadler, a famous 18th-century, Austrian clarinetist. The two met when Mozart came to Vienna in 1781. While their professional collaborations were successful, their personal relationship was more complicated. But the beauty of the piece, and the soft light in which it paints the clarinet, belies none of this alleged acrimony.

Tonight's selection, the third movement, is marked by a lighthearted "conversation" between the soloist and the orchestra, in which each playfully tries to outshine the other. This playfulness, however, does little to hide the seriousness with which each approaches its task. As the rondo progresses, the orchestra plays with greater fervor, and the soloist in turn pulls out all of the virtuosic stops. The result is an homage to the clarinet that is both dramatic and delightful, much like friendship itself.

Jeremiah Clarke

(1674–1707)

Trumpet Voluntary in D

Comparatively little is known of Jeremiah Clarke and his music, despite the fact that he composed one of classical music's most recognizable pieces of music--one that has become an integral part of wedding ceremonies throughout the western world.

Clarke is widely thought to have been born in London in 1674. He was a student of renowned organist John Blow, and later assumed the coveted position of organist of the Chapel Royal.

Clarke's musical life shared many similarities with one of his contemporaries, Henry Purcell. Like Purcell, Clarke wrote music for both church and the theater. Like Purcell, Clarke studied with organist John Blow. Clarke also collaborated with Purcell's younger brother, Daniel, on a semi-opera entitled *The Island Princess* and, likely, other compositions as well.

Sadly, the similarities of the lives of the Purcell brothers and Clarke, and their close working relationship, undoubtedly contributed to tonight's work being mistakenly attributed to Purcell until the 1940s! It wasn't until sometime during the 1940s that the blunder was discovered and the piece correctly attributed to Clarke. Originally called *Prince of Denmark's March*, Clarke wrote the piece for harpsichord. It was later arranged for trumpet and organ at the beginning of the twentieth century, taking the form that is best known today.

Reputedly scorned by an unattainable lover, Clarke died young, by his own hand. Had he lived longer, who knows what he could have achieved? If his soaring *Trumpet Voluntary* is any indication, it would have been a great deal.

Ralph Vaughan Williams

(1872-1958)

Tuba Concerto in F minor

Ralph (pronounced "Rafe") Vaughan Williams was the son of an English vicar, the Reverend Arthur Vaughan Williams, who died when Ralph was scarcely three years old. Although Vaughan Williams was at least an agnostic, he was drawn to religious and spiritual themes for many of his greatest works, such as the *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*, *Dona Nobis Pacem*, *The Sea Symphony*, and even a *Mass in G Minor*.

Vaughan Williams began taking music lessons as a young boy in 1878, learning the violin and then the piano. As a teenager, he played the violin and viola with his school orchestra. At the Royal College of Music, he studied composition with Sir Hubert Parry

and Charles Villiers Stanford. It was at the Royal College that Vaughan Williams met another young composer destined for greatness, Gustav Holst (composer of *The Planets*). While the musical styles of the two men eventually would sharply diverge, they admired and championed each other's works throughout their lives.

Vaughan Williams' early and mid-life orchestral compositions were sweeping melodic symphonies, heavily informed by his work in the church and his love of English folk songs. These works included such masterpieces as *A London Symphony* and *The Lark Ascending*. His later work, which often reflected the pre- and post-war angst felt in England and throughout the world, took on more dramatically somber tones, yet still were rife with themes of ecstasy and transcendence. In his *Symphony No. 5*, Vaughan Williams seems to meld all of the themes and emotions of the past half-century into one beautifully intertwined work.

Tonight's piece, the *Tuba Concerto in F minor*, is one of Vaughan Williams' later works, written in 1954 for Philip Catelinet, principal tubist of the London Symphony Orchestra. While it was regarded by many in his day as an eclectic, somewhat trivial, work, it has stood the test of time to become one of the composer's most popular works. Soloist Rick Maxwell tonight brings us the concerto's first movement, the *Allegro Moderato*. It is a favorite of tubists everywhere, and sure to become one of yours as well.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Capriccio Italien, Opus 45

Along with Beethoven, his is one of the few names instantly recognizable even to people who have never heard a note of classical music. For those unfamiliar with classical music, Tchaikovsky can be a watershed. He is one of those rare composers whose appeal is so immediate that it cuts across cultural lines, and so enduring that generations of snobbish critics have been unable to diminish it. One of the principal reasons for this is Tchaikovsky's incredible melodic gift. It's almost impossible to find a work of his that doesn't overflow with memorable (may we say "catchy") tunes.

Capriccio Italien is no exception. The piece is a warm-hearted ode to Italy, which Tchaikovsky visited in 1880, after the failure of an ill-advised marriage entered into despite his homosexuality. While there, Tchaikovsky was inspired to note down the folk music and street songs he heard, and to incorporate many of their elements into the *Capriccio*.

The trumpet fanfare that opens the work is based on a bugle call that Tchaikovsky heard each morning from the barracks next to his hotel. Both the fanfare and the string melody that follows are more formal than capricious, but this mood is finally dispelled by the sound of an Italian street band. After a brief nod back to the opening, an accelerating tarantella brings the *Capriccio* to a joyously whirlwind finish.

Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov
(1844-1908)

Capriccio Espagnol, Opus 34

Like Tchaikovsky, Glinka, and so many others, Rimsky-Korsakov was indelibly affected and inspired by the places he visited. As a young Russian Naval officer, Rimsky-Korsakov was able to visit some of the world's most exciting and exotic ports of call. One destination that definitely left its mark on young Nikolay was Spain.

Showing the same flair for Spanish melodies, harmonies, and rhythms that he did for the music of his own country, Rimsky-Korsakov embarked on composing the *Capriccio Espagnol* with a book of songs by a Spanish composer, Jose Inzena y Castellanos, as his starting point. What he ended with was, in his mastery of orchestral color and effects, pure Rimsky-Korsakov—and a work that never fails to excite and delight concert audiences.

The work bursts open with a festive *Alborada* (a Spanish morning serenade) that showcases both soloists and the full orchestra. This is followed by a lyrical theme, introduced by the horns, and embellished by a series of variations. After the theme gently fades with flute and strings, the opening *Alborado* returns, bringing with it a jaunty solo violin. The next section, *Scene and Gypsy Song*, is introduced by drum roll and a trumpet call reminiscent of the *Capriccio Italien*, followed by more virtuoso instrumental display and fiery orchestral passages. To the rhythm of castanets, the *Fandango* begins and, after a brief look back at an earlier theme, builds to one of the most exhilarating finales in all classical music.

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