

American Double

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Program Notes

Beethoven, L.v.

Full Name: Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827). German composer of great renown and influence on later generations of musicians. Beethoven grew up in Bonn, Germany, but spent most of his professional years in Vienna. He studied with Haydn, and made great innovations in virtually every musical genre. Typically viewed as the bridge between the High Classical style of Mozart and the Romantic period, Beethoven's music was more athletic and dramatic in effect than his contemporaries. A great pianist, Beethoven is deservedly placed with Bach and Mozart as one of the great musical geniuses of all time.

Sonata in G

Allegro assai

Tempo di Minuetto

Allegro vivace

It was common in Beethoven's time to publish more than one work in an "opus". Thus, opus 30 consists of three violin sonatas of which this is the third. They were composed in 1802 and dedicated to Alexander the First, Emperor of Russia.

This work begins vivaciously, and the first bars bubble like champagne. Its form utilizes the sonata principle in a straight-forward and transparent way. The Development section leads through a parade of keys until it arrives at a climactic return to the home key of G.

Typically, a slow movement adds contrast to a sonata's first movement, which is normally in a quick tempo. Here, however, Beethoven gives the curious marking of "Tempo of a Minuet", but then follows that up with a qualifying remark: *ma molto moderato e grazioso* ("but very moderately and gracefully"). The result is a movement that contrasts in character, rather than in tempo, because it is rather quick when compared to a normal slow movement. This easy-going, songlike movement showcases both instruments to an equal degree, and features a theme (introduced by the violin) which Beethoven was very fond of. He also used it in a piano sonata (op. 10/1) and a string quartet (op. 18/5). It is accompanied by a texture that is meant to imitate a peasant band, with the left hand of the piano being an unsteady tuba player who seems to have had one too many drinks...

The final movement consists of themes that are all closely related in some way. Beethoven uses harmonic surprises and subtle shifts of tonal center to create a dazzling and showy effect that closes the work in spectacular fashion. **Duration:** 17 minutes.

Bolcom, W.

William Elden Bolcom (b. 1938). Composer/pianist **William Bolcom** was born in Seattle, Washington, in 1938. He began private composition studies at age 11 with John Verrall and piano lessons with Berthe Poncy Jacobson at the University of Washington. During this time he performed extensively in the Northwest and Seattle areas. In 1958 Bolcom earned his B.A. from the University of Washington, going on to study with Darius Milhaud at Mills College and at the *Conservatoire de Paris*. He earned a doctorate in composition in 1964 from Stanford University, where he worked with Leland Smith. He has since gone on to become one of the best known composers of his generation, having received commissions from the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic to name only a few. Most recently, he received the 2006 National Medal of Honor (bestowed upon him by the President) and was named Musical America's "Composer of the Year" for 2007.

First Sonata (1956/84)

I. *Legend*

II. *Nocturne*

III. *Quasi-Variations*

This sonata was originally written while Bolcom was a freshman at the University of Washington. Originally dedicated to Peter and Joanna Marsh, the revised version was requested and performed by the Daws-Faricy Duo.

The first movement draws its heritage from the rich tradition of Loewe Ballads, as well as the Legend repertoire, (Wieniawski's famous *Legende*, op. 17). The thrust of the idea is that the composer is relating a story through the music. The form, consequently, is loosely organized in a narrative-form with frequent shifts in tempo and musical material. While there are large-scale thematic reprises, it is the story-telling aspect that makes this movement compelling.

The second movement was described by Bolcom as inspired by the Pacific Northwest, presumably the indigenous tribes whose music the composer might have encountered during his time growing up in the area. The haunting melodies can easily be imagined to lift out of the richly forested areas on a thick mist of a chill morning. These melodies (described in the score as "like a distant memory") evaporate into a delicate thematic exchange between the violin and piano which culminates into an impassioned cry towards the end of the movement.

The third movement is an early sign of Bolcom's affinity for music with popular roots. A simple melody opens and closes this movement, around which rest a number of variations, which are more formally considered "impressions", as there is no rigorous adherence to a variation form. Sectional contrast, however, is readily apparent and a wealth of melodic, textural and harmonic ideas are incorporated by the composer. **Duration:** 19 minutes.

Sonatina (1958)

Movements:

I. *Moderato*

II. *Andante*

III. *Allegro*

The *Sonatina* is a work of straightforward, transparent textures, with only a mild use of dissonance. Given the title, this is exactly what one expect and Bolcom delivers a gem of a work. The opening of the first movement shows striking similarities to the First Sonata (composed two years earlier) in its upward ascent and rhythmic gestures. The ABA form is deceptive in its seeming simplicity. The middle movement functions as an interlude and introduction to the last movement which employs an alternating meter, as well as rhythmic complexities and motivic contrast. Here too, as in the first movement, the seventh plays an important role, and ultimately serves to unify the entire work. **Duration:** 6 minutes.

Pastorale (1962)

Movements:

I. *Allegretto grazioso*

II. *Variations*

III. *Coda [Adagio espressivo]*

Composed in 1962, this work already shows distinct hallmarks of what would later develop into Bolcom's mature style and represents a watershed in Bolcom's career: it was at this point that he started to feel truly dissatisfied with a purely academic approach to composition. However, he felt torn by the ramifications of a departure from the "fashionable" music of his contemporaries. Much as he admired the music of Berio, Stockhausen and Boulez, his personal style drew him in a different direction and this work, paradoxically his most rigorously atonal work for violin and piano signals a welcoming of new directions in his music.

These new directions are found, strangely enough, in the conservatism of Bolcom's compositional approach. Whereas his contemporaries were discarding musical principals, such as meter, and recurrent form, Bolcom exhibits a surprising adherence to these principals. The first movement is composed in three main sections, with an overarching ABA form. Rhythmic ambiguity is exploited to create an exotic flavor. The second movement is a variation movement, which is typical in classic musical form, and the third movement returns to the material of the first movement, making the entire work a large ABA. **Duration:** 7 minutes.

Fancy Tales (1972)

Movements:

The Phantom-Sweetheart

The Centaurs in Flight

The Dwarf's Serenade: Variations

The Abandoned Ferryboat

Bolcom wrote *Fancy Tales* as a commission for the "San Francisco Chamber Music Society". He finished the work in 1972, and dedicated it to Daniel and Machiko Kobialka.

Whereas much "serious" music eschews extra-musical associations, this work enthusiastically embraces them: the descriptive titles serve to guide as an interpretive backdrop in order to enrich the emotional impact of each movement.

The first movement, *The Phantom-Sweetheart*, has an inscription at the top of the first page of the piano score that reads "...shucks, her hair was so soft..." from *Weird Tales* (c. 1950). As Bolcom once explained during a coaching, "Weird Tales" was a pulp rag that featured all different sorts of fantastical stories. This one in particular concerned a fellow who fell in love with a vampire. His last words, as he sunk into a stupor of the un-dead, was "...shucks, her hair was so soft..."

The movement alternates between three characters. It starts out with a startling chordal progression in the piano to be followed by a simple melody in the violin. As the music progresses, the themes are varied slightly until the next character enters: a quivering accompaniment in the piano, coupled with long, sustained notes in the violin. The third section sounds as if made of quicksilver, and is described by the composer variously as "fleeting" and "like gossamer". It sweeps along, as if floating, perhaps as a vampire might in a disembodied state, searching for its next victim.

The second movement, *The Centaurs in Flight*, is a brutal, punishing work. A centaur is a monster with a human upper and an equine lower male body. In the piano score, a poem by José-Maria Hérédá (trans. by Bolcom) is transcribed. It reads:

Epigraph for no. 2

*They run, swilling the cup of murder and revolt,
Toward the escarpment of their mountain hideout.
Fear hurtles them, they feel the scrape of Death's throat
Behind them, and they stink of lion-sweat and fright.
The hydra and the plotting lizard do not trip their hooves.
They trample across ravines, through hailstorms, over thick brake—
Ossa, Olympus, black Pelion will they overtake?
Just now the crest of the great cities heaves.
One of the herd looks back: whips his head back around,
And with a great whinny of savage fright
Leaps into the rolling stampede his brothers sound.
The gorgeous calm full moon does not make him bound
Ahead; it is the long shade the moon casts in the night,
The gigantic shadow of horrid Hercules bearing down.*

This graphic illustration of fear, massive strength and crashing violence is well portrayed by the composer. The texture is exceedingly complex: meters seemingly "falling over" onto each other in tumultuous fashion and angry, trampling double-stops depict the stampeding hoard of ferocious, yet panicked, centaurs.

The third movement, *The Dwarf's Serenade*, depicts the story of a dwarf who attempts to woo a beautiful princess. Sadly, not only is he short and ugly, but one of his legs is too short, giving him an ungraceful gait. Undaunted, the dwarf doggedly strives at courtly gestures by various means, however unsuccessfully. His frustration finally boils over into a tumultuous climax.

The movement begins with a *cadenza* for the violin that depicts the dwarf's passionate infatuation with the beautiful lady. This flows into the *Tema*, which depicts a dance that the dwarf attempts to impress her with. However, the accents on off-beats that the composer specifies already presage the difficulties that the dwarf will face, his short leg making him a woefully inadequate match for other suitors. Throughout the Variations (of which there are five), the

dwarf attempts various poses and positions, but all for naught. Variation five (entitled *Finale*) culminates in a violent, whirling dance that is full of anger at his unfortunate predicament. The true character of this kind-hearted, though frustrated, poor man reveals itself in the final bar of the piece, however, in which the composer imparts a graceful exit by bringing back a fragment of the *Tema*.

The last movement, entitled *The Abandoned Ferryboat*, consists of haunting melodies that undulate like the waters they depict. The imagery has to do with a half-sunken Ferryboat, (perhaps in Puget Sound where Bolcom grew up) up against which the waves gently lap, but with a melancholy that hearkens back to happier times. The movement starts with a melody that is broken up by “missing notes”. One image could be that of an aged Pianola, whose long-broken self-playing mechanism intones a haphazard melody as dictated by the undulation of the waves. The form is that of departure and return, with a middle section that introduces an innovative technique: the violinist is asked to whistle a melody, while at the same time playing the same melody a fourth lower. The effect is chilling, as if the passengers of this long abandoned ferryboat were calling from the depths. At last, the melodies trail away, like a mist that gets blown away by a chill breeze. **Duration:** 16 minutes.

Duo Fantasy (1973)

The relationship between William Bolcom and Sergiu Luca can only be described as fortuitous for both violin-piano duos and audiences alike. The *Duo Fantasy* was written while Bolcom was composer-in-residence at the Portland Summer Concerts in 1973. In exchange for his fee, Bolcom was asked to write a work, which turned out to be the *Duo*. Bolcom and Luca gave the premiere during this festival.

The *Duo Fantasy* is a continuous, one-movement composition and is structured in eight sections. It is relatively easy to distinguish between the sections, as they are stylistically, texturally, and in many other ways, contrasting. Thus, despite the fact that there are no “movements” per se, there is a strong sense of structure due to the contrasts that the composer builds into the work.

The first section, given a marking of *risoluto, ma scherzando*, is remarkable for its fluidity of expression. Due to complicated meters that frequently shift, a sense of “fantasy” or improvisation, is established from the start. The instruments frequently imitate each other, waiting until the other stops before playing. It is this independence that explains the “duo” aspect of the title: the instruments are equals, not a violin solo with piano accompaniment.

The juxtaposition of an atonally-based melody with a tonal backdrop is a characteristic of Bolcom’s compositional style; the first movement of the Second Sonata is a good example. This style also typifies the second section (*flowing, not rushed*) of this work: the piano plays a jazzy rhythm with harmonies that are firmly triadic in origin. At the same time, the violin melody meanders nonchalantly, tracing melodic lines that ascend and descend seemingly of their own accord and for no particular reason.

The strange sound world of the second section is abruptly interrupted by a sudden change in texture as the third section (*Presto, very rhythmic*) crashes through. Accents, wildly careening passages, and cackling trills abound as the music propels itself towards, what turns out to be, a halt that is as sudden as the section started.

The fourth section, *leggiero*, amounts to an accompanied cadenza, or solo passagework, for the violin. The piano part is actually a modified variant of the harmonic frame it possessed in the second section. Here, however, the composer has withdrawn the sense of rhythmic pulse and uses extremes of register to cloak the resemblance.

Described as the “Stephen Foster” section by Luca, the fifth section (*Tenderly*) presents a new type of contrast: both parts are set in a tonal context. The phrase-lengths are conventional, as are the harmonic progressions. This section is repeated, though slightly modified in the seventh section.

The intervening material in the sixth section (*Fast Rag*) contains a wealth of musical styles, which alternate one after the other. What starts as a ragtime in the piano turns into raucous country fiddling’ in short order, to be followed by others. At the climax of the section, guitar-like strumming in the violin and a wildly repeating motive in the piano are morphed, in the space of a measure or two, into a completely different character. This is the beginning of the seventh section, one in which the pianist is instructed to play like “a Baptist piano” as the violin spins a host of noble melodies.

The final section returns to the material of the first section, as if to bookend the work and give it its sense of closure. In all, the work is a classic example of Bolcom’s, now famous, eclectic sense of style. **Duration:** 12 minutes.

Second Sonata (1979)

I. *Summer Dreams*

II. *Brutal, fast*

III. *Adagio*

IV. *In Memory of Joe Venuti*

This work, finished in 1979, was the fruit of a friendship between violinist Serge Luca and Bolcom. Their association began in 1973, when they played the *Duo Fantasy* together, a work dedicated to Luca. Bolcom was impressed that Luca had an interest in jazz violin, especially in Joe Venuti, a violinist whom Bolcom held in extremely high regard. While Bolcom has mentioned that there is little in this Sonata that directly relates to Venuti's style of playing, he feels strongly that there must be a familiarity, on the performer's part, with the "special world of Venuti".

The first movement is entitled *Summer Dreams*, and its laid-back, lemonade-on-the-veranda ambience is well depicted. It is set in three principle parts, of which the first and third are related through the accompaniment in the piano. The middle section presents a striking contrast to the outer sections, introducing a spiky texture, punctuated by double-stop chords in both instruments, with a heavy reliance on intervallic dissonance. A violin cadenza acts as a transition back to the sound-world of the first section, and the movement ends with a blues-influenced "shmeer" in the violin.

The second movement, entitled *Brutal, fast*, lives up to its name as it violently crashes into the calm relaxation of the previous movement with a loud chord in the piano. Alternating between unpredictably-placed melodic fragments in the violin, and hectic periods of sustained activity, the listener is consistently kept off-balance, which is, naturally, the point. Even at the end of the movement, which is quiet, the feeling of menace keeps one guarding against further disturbances until the third movement is comfortably underway.

The conventional-sounding title of the third movement, *Adagio*, is at odds with its unconventional feel. While the movement itself is set in two contrasting sections, there are various sub-sections which pace the momentum. The first section is richly chromatic in its vocabulary and often features the violin in a prominent role, carrying the melody at various points. A culmination of the fierce expressivity of this first section can be recognized by the screaming octaves that the composer sets in the uppermost reaches of the violin. This is followed by the second section, which returns to a tonal grounding. Luca says it was at this point in the composition that Bolcom heard of Venuti's death. This second section of the movement functions as a requiem to this violinist whom Bolcom admired so deeply.

The final movement is, perhaps understandably, entitled *In Memory of Joe Venuti*. There are parallels to the first movement here, perhaps the most noticeable of which is the unabashed return to tonality that, in the intervening movements, was intentionally obscured. This is not to say that tonality is doggedly adhered to: at various points, the texture explodes, seemingly volcanic-like, into jagged and fierce contrast. However, the jazz-like ethos triumphantly prevails until the movement closes with a return to the material that closed the first movement: long-sustained double-stops in the violin, accompanied by chords in the piano, to be closed by a "shmeer" in the violin.

Graceful Ghost Rag: Concert Variation for violin and piano (1983)

The "Graceful Ghost" first started as a piano piece (part of *Three Ghost Rags*-1970). It was then incorporated into a trio for clarinet, violin and piano, entitled *Afternoon Cakewalk Suite* (premiered by David Shifrin, Sergiu Luca and Bolcom in 1979). In 1983, the composer reworked it into an arrangement for violin and piano as a wedding present for Sergiu Luca. Material was added from the original work for piano solo (from which the arrangement was extracted), making it an actual "variation" on the Graceful Ghost Rag. It has since been arranged for dozens of other ensembles by other performers, making it perhaps Bolcom's best known work.

William Bolcom describes his compositional approach to "Ghost" as being similar to Kreisler, with a little bit of Joe Venuti thrown in for good measure. The key to this work is found in its character, which evokes a melancholic sadness, a limpid gracefulness that is perhaps indicative of Bolcom's enduring feelings for its inspiration, the memory of the composer's father, Robert Samuel Bolcom. **Duration:** 6 minutes.

Third Sonata, "Sonata Stramba" (1992)

I. *A piacere, drammatico – Allegro con fuoco*

II. *Andante*

III. *Like a shiver*

IV. *Moderato, risoluto, all' arabesca*

This sonata was written to commemorate the career of the great violin pedagogues of the twentieth-century, Dorothy Delay. It was commissioned by one of Delay's finest students, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg and was performed at Aspen in 1993 by Sonnenberg and Bolcom. The composer remarks on the subtitle "Sonata Stramba" (program notes in Lincoln Center's March 1992 *Stagebill*, 12D) in the following way: "I am told by my longtime librettist and collaborator Arnold Weinstein that "Stramba" means something like "weird" in Italian, and this is certainly a weird Sonata! Its uncanny mood possessed me throughout its creation."

The work opens with an extended cadenza for solo violin which culminates in a stormy movement in which the Renaissance-related *Guerra-Guerra* motif (see Monteverdi madrigals, book 8, 1638) is referenced. Bolcom refers to this principal motive as "obsessive and implacable, like war in human history." The movement seems to move in vicious spurts of energy, here languid, but shortly going full-speed ahead like a locomotive.

The second movement gives a short reprieve, but the composer does not allow the music to deteriorate into a saccharin-flavored stupor: dissonance creeps in at exactly the point where one would least expect it. The constant state of dissatisfaction must have been what Bolcom was referring to when he said that "the Andante seems hardly a relief from the tragic mood [of the first movement]."

The third movement is like quicksilver: the notes flit by with so quickly that it is a challenge to even notice them as individual tones. The entire effect leaves one with an uneasy feeling, and the descriptive title "Like a shiver" is completely appropriate.

The final movement is described by Bolcom as being "somewhere between the darker tangos of Astor Piazzolla and that of heavy-metal rock". The descriptive "*all' arabesca*" in the title refers to the technique of composition which involves ornamenting a simple melodic line throughout a work in order to create an elaborate pastiche by the close of the movement. Bolcom utilizes this technique to erect a structure of immense strength that heaves like an angry ocean in a storm, even the more subdued parts of which leave the listener with a disconcerted sense of foreboding. Perhaps it is fitting to close with Bolcom's assessment of the work "the whole work is 'Stramba'".

Fourth Sonata (1994)

I. *Allegro brillante*

II. *White Night*

III. *Arabesque*

IV. *Jota*

Written in 1994, this sonata was commissioned as a birthday present for Henry Rubin (at the time a professor at the University of Houston) by his wife, Cynthia. It is direct in its musical expression, clean-edged and confident in its compositional outlines. This is especially evident in the first movement, *Allegro brillante*, which evokes a neo-classic aesthetic in the presentation of its themes: two contrasting themes are followed by a section which is developmental in character, after which the first theme returns, mimicking a "Recapitulation". It is a tightly-knit movement with great emotional persuasiveness.

Whereas the first movement celebrates objective musical presentation, the compositional direction of the second movement, *White Night*, is inspired by the programmatic content of the inscription printed directly below the title:

A fitful sleeper recalls an early tune, hoping it will soothe him to sleep. Instead, it keeps him awake.

A fragment of this 'early tune' appears at the very beginning of the movement, set in the violin, and is then imitated by the piano. This is abruptly interrupted by a screeching entrance in the violin, which starts a section entitled *Faster, nervous*. This is then followed by a transition that utilizes the fragment of the "early tune" heard earlier, but this time it is sequenced only by the piano. The effect in the piano is one of building anxiety, which is in contrast to the violin's other-worldly, dream-like feel. This contrast is due principally to the harmonics the violin plays, "pan-pipe"-like,

which creates a magical sound environment. The “early tune” is recalled in full in the principal middle section of the movement. However, it is again interrupted, and sleep continues to elude the “fitful sleeper”.

The third movement, *Arabesque*, was inspired by a trip to Cairo taken by Bolcom and his wife. Bolcom admits to a strong attraction to things “Moorish” and this affection is found here. Bolcom utilizes a popular-sounding Arab melody and couples it with effects, such as *pizzicato* in the violin made to sound like a drum by knocking the instrument with the knuckle, as well as drones in the violin and a varied repetition of the melody. The culmination of the movement coincides with the first chord of the last movement, *Jota*.

The term *Jota* tends to call to many listener’s minds the works of Sarasate, Liszt and de Falla. While the tonally-based harmonies to which these works owe their specific “feel” feature less prominently here, there are many other important elements of the style that are clearly in evidence: triple meter, accompaniment by strumming guitars (here depicted by *pizzicato* in the violin) and two syllable upbeats. Further, the enthusiastic flair that Bolcom infuses into the materials is quintessentially Spanish in its inspiration.

Brahms, J.

Full Name: Johannes Brahms (1833-1897). German composer whose lyrical beauty and profound dramatic depth mark him as a musician of the highest rank. Brahms was born in Bonn, but spent much of his professional life in Vienna. Convinced that lyricism and classical form could be reconciled, his conservative stance placed him at odds with some of the so-called “progressives” of the day, such as Liszt and Wagner, who in turn considered Brahms’ music to be old-fashioned. The quality of his works is attested to by the fact that he is one of the only composers whose every published work is in the current repertoire.

Sonatensatz

Title can be translated “Sonata movement”. Originally, this work started out as a movement (“Scherzo”) in a larger work, of which the other movements were composed by Schumann and Dietrich. It consists of a violent beginning in the key of C-minor, with a lyrical, contrasting middle section in major. It finishes triumphantly. **Duration:** 7 minutes.

Sonata in D-minor

I. *Allegro*

II. *Adagio*

III. *Un poco presto e con sentimento*

IV. *Presto agitato*

This work is Brahms’ one-hundredth and eighth published work. Brahms had published two other violin sonatas prior to this, both after he had published his Violin Concerto (op. 77). In short, Brahms was a highly “seasoned” composer when he penned this work. It is in four movements, whereas the previous were in three, and the minor key contrasts to the previous sonatas as well (G and A major respectively). All this combines to create a sonata of incredible dramatic sweep. Brahms once had this advice to give a young composer “I never cool down over a work once begun until it is perfected, unassailable...until there is not a note too much or too little, not a bar you could improve on.” This work emphatically shows that Brahms took his own advice to heart.

The first movement begins with a melancholic lament that seems unable to find direction. This is insistently interrupted by the piano in the transition to the second theme, which is a beautifully singing melody in F, first played by the piano, then in the violin. A false recapitulation is interspersed within the Development section, which only heightens the dramatic effect when the theme finally, and triumphantly returns. The movement, however, ends quietly in D major, almost as if exhausted by its exertions. This peaceful close enables the performer to make an effective transition into the *Adagio* (also in D major), which is played directly, without a pause between the movements.

The second movement utilizes a song-like *cantabile* to create a mood of reconciliation after the storm of the first movement. Significantly, the violin is given prominence over the piano in this movement, and carries the theme throughout (though, for a brief period, it is played by both instruments at the same time), whereas in the first movement, the piano introduced many of the important themes. This melody is followed by a tragic motif, in the minor mode, written in thirds for the violin and with chords that are rolled in the piano. The effect in the piano is one of a harp, being strummed in the lowest of registers. The effect is chilling after the warm-hearted and welcoming theme that opens the movement. Significantly, this shift to the minor mode happens three times, and throughout his career,

Brahms used multiples of threes (as opposed to more conventional even-numbered pairings) to build his compositional structures. This movement is a classic example of that tendency.

The third movement is a curious example of a Scherzo. "Scherzo" literally means "a joke", but there is nothing humorous about this movement. Melancholic and brooding would be more appropriate descriptions. In a relatively straightforward ABA, this movement effects an elegant, if weighty, transition to the final movement.

The fourth movement erupts violently, rending the delicate texture of moments before with heavy activity. This movement adopts the form of a Rondo, in which the first theme heard in this movement returns repeatedly throughout. However, Brahms varies each return in some way so as to veil its impact. In this way, the final return of the theme, in its original form and in its original key, only returns near the end of the movement. This has the effect of emphasizing the supremacy of the home key, D-minor, above all others, and the climax is thunderous at its zenith. **Duration:** 22 minutes.

Chaikovsky, P.

Full Name: Piotr Illyich Chaikovsky (1840-1893). Russian composer best known for his ballets (*Swan Lake* and *Sleeping Beauty*) and symphonies (six). Chaikovsky's warm, open-hearted melodies, sweeping dramatic effects and brilliant orchestration are considered to be his most characteristic traits.

Melodie

This work was originally part of a larger work in three movements, *Souvenir d'un lieu cher* or "Remembrance of a Dear Place". The "Dear Place" was specifically the country estate of his friend and patroness, Nadja von Meck, and was located in the Russian city of Brailov. The sweet melodies indicate the depth of admiration that Chaikovsky held for von Meck. **Duration:** 5 minutes.

Debussy, C.

Full Name: Claude Achille Debussy (1862-1918) French composer often identified as an Impressionist. Though the composer himself often chaffed at the description, the characterization refers to the imagery of his music, which often used pictorial titles. *La Mer* or "The Sea" (1905) is a prime example of this, in which the orchestra is used to "describe" the sea in the morning, noon, and evening. A supremely gifted composer, he composed numerous works for the piano, in addition to songs and chamber music.

Beau Soir

The title can be translated as "A Beautiful Evening" and was transcribed by Jascha Heifetz. Hushed tones are interwoven with a lush harmony which combine to create a lovely mood-impression from the 16 year-old Debussy. **Duration:** 3 minutes.

En Bateau

The title can be translated "On a Boat" and was originally a piece for piano four-hands, taken from the larger set of pieces called *Petite Suite*. It was transcribed by the French violinist Gaston Choisnel. The title speaks for itself: the accompaniment serves to illustrate the gentle pitching of a boat on the waves of a sun-speckled lake on a quiet summer's day. **Duration:** 4 minutes.

La fille aux cheveux de lin

The title can be translated "The Girl with the Flaxen Hair" and was originally a piece for piano solo, found in the first volume of the *Preludes* (1910). It was transcribed by the French violinist Leon Roques. Its title comes from a poem that Debussy was fond of which tells of a young Scots girl in the early morning sunshine. **Duration:** 3 minutes.

La Plus que lent

The title can be loosely translated as "a little bit slower" and was originally a piece for piano solo, transcribed for violin and piano by Leon Roques. In the piano score, it is described simply as "A Waltz for piano", however, this work is worlds apart from *The Blue Danube*. The work starts with an uncertain tenderness which erupts into a passionate declarations only to retreat into vulnerability again by the close of the work. A true gem by one of the great composers of the twentieth century. **Duration:** 4 minutes.

Kreisler, F.

Full Name Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962) Austrian violinist and composer known for his original compositions and transcriptions for violin and piano. His works are often identified as having a distinctly Viennese flavor. Although a general description, this characterization seems to ring true, at least in an intuitive sense. Kreisler's works can be at turns charming, melancholic or majestic. His talent as a composer was matched by his violinistic abilities and his performances of his own works rank as some of the great recordings ever made.

Liebesfreud

The title can be translated as "Love's Joy". The exuberant feel of this work is transmitted through the chordal beginning, and throughout the work's various sections, it describes the various moods, all uplifting, that one goes through while in the throes of Love.

Duration: 3 minutes.

Liebesleid

The title can be translated as "Love's Sorrow" and is a melancholic in expression of the title. Passionate outbursts wilt as the heart breaks over love lost. **Duration:** 3 minutes.

Melodie

Kreisler was fond of composing works "in the style of" a certain composer. Here the composer in question is Christoph Willibald von Gluck (1714-1787). This work has often been attributed to actually being drawn from Gluck's opera "Orfeo ed Euridice", however, this is untrue. Nonetheless, the haunting melody that Kreisler has composed accurately depicts the tragic subject matter of the opera. **Duration:** 3 minutes.

Tempo di Minuetto

This work was originally attributed to Gaetano Pugnani (1731-1798), first violinist of the King's Music in Turin. However, Kreisler later amended the title page of this (and other compositions) to "in the style of" Pugnani. This is a stately Minuet that exudes the poise and pride of Imperial Vienna. **Duration:** 4 minutes.

Massenet, J.

Full Name: Jules Emile Frederic Massenet (1842-1912). French composer who won the most important composition prize available to composers of his day, the *Prix de Rome* at age twenty-one. He subsequently taught at the Paris Conservatoire and became one of the pre-eminent composers of his day. His style is characterized by lyrical beauty and a smooth voluptuous style.

Meditation

This transcription is by the great Belgian violinist Martin Marsick (1848-1924). A teacher at the Paris Conservatoire for many years, some of Marsick's most illustrious pupils included Jacques Thibaud and Carl Flesch. The curious fact surrounding this composition is that it existed in eight different transcriptions by the time the opera it was a part of, *Thais*, was premiered (in 1894)! Its placement in the opera is as a dramatic interlude. It is played with the curtain down, and symbolizes the moment when Thais, a courtesan in fourth-century Alexandria, converts to Christianity under the influence of the monk Athanael. In the operatic version, when the theme returns, a wordless chorus accompanies it, giving the atmosphere an ethereal quality. **Duration:** 5 minutes.

Ravel, M.

Full Name: Maurice Ravel (1875-1937). French composer whose works exhibit an exacting ear for crystalline melodies, transparent textures and delicate harmonic shadings. Ravel's career was a strange mix of success and failure. He failed in attaining the *Prix de Rome* three times, and was forbidden to try a fourth, however, later in his career he was offered (and declined) the highest honor the French government bestows upon its artists, the *Legion d'Honneur*. His works were perhaps somewhat ahead of their time: the sparse textures of his later works contrasted starkly to the still very heavy influence of Wagner in the musical culture of his day. Today he is rightly appreciated as one of the great composers of the twentieth-century.

Violin Sonata

I. *Allegretto*

II. *Blues: Moderato*

III. *Perpetuum mobile: Allegro*

The first movement is a pastiche of motives that are used interchangeably, mosaic-style, throughout the course of the movement. The entrance of the piano, a single line, presages the general textural approach of this movement: sparseness. The violin then plays the theme, entering with a mild dissonance between the instruments: an A sounds against the piano's B-flat. During the course of the movement, the listener hears bells being chimed in the piano, a throaty and angular motive in the violin, and motivic fragments being interchanged between the instruments. The aspects to pay special attention to are just these: the various motives play special roles in this movement, and are easy to recognize because they are highly contrasting.

The second movement is perhaps one of the most obviously jazz-influenced compositions to date. However, this is blues of Paris circa 1920, not the later types, such as the Chicago blues of Muddy Waters and B.B. King. It is a tightly controlled, cultivated style and this suited Ravel's exacting tastes very well. One can almost imagine a smoky hall and a lone spotlight on a slinky soprano when listening to this movement. It is a stunning recreation of the style for violin and piano.

The third movement is often misunderstood as a virtuosic piece for violin with piano accompaniment. When one considers, however, how many motives from the first movement are reintroduced in the piano, it is obvious that the most important part is the piano. That said, the most florid part is certainly found in the violin, but its role is to act as a "window dressing" around the more important thematic areas in the piano.