

Masterpieces Celebrating the Human Journey

Music by Barber, Bruch, Ravel, Prokofiev and Piazzolla

Aude Castagna, concert director and cello
Vlada Volkova, piano; ***Jeff Gallagher***, clarinet
Shannon Delaney and ***Brian Johnston***, violins
Eleanor Angel, viola

Overture on Hebrew Themes (1919)

Sergei Prokofiev

Eight Pieces for Clarinet, Cello, & Piano Op. 83 (1910)

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INTERMISSION

Adagio for Strings Op. 11 (1936)

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- Allegro moderato – très doux
- Assez vif – très rythmé
- Très lent
- Vif et agité

The Music

Nostalgia: Prokofiev, Overture on Hebrew Themes (1919)

Sergei Prokofiev wrote the **Overture on Hebrew Themes**, Op. 34, in 1919, during a trip to the United States. The piece was commissioned by a Russian sextet, the Zimro Ensemble, sponsored by the Russian Zionist Organization and was written for the unusual combination of clarinet, string quartet, and piano.

The members had just arrived in America from the Far East on a world tour and gave Prokofiev a notebook of Jewish folksongs. The melodies Prokofiev chose have never been traced to any authentic sources and may have been actually composed by the ensemble's clarinetist in the Jewish style.

Its structure follows the form of a fairly conventional overture. It is in the key of C minor. The first theme, *un poco allegro*, has a jumpy and festive rhythm, unmistakably evoking *klezmer* music by alternating low and high registers and using repeated swelling and tapering of volume. The second theme, *piu mosso*, is a nostalgic cantabile theme introduced by the cello and then passed to the first violin.

Dreams of Love: Eight Pieces for Clarinet, Cello, & Piano, (1910) Op. 83 by Max Bruch Numbers 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7.

Max Bruch (1838-1920) received his earliest music instruction from his mother, a noted singer and pianist. He was widely known and respected in his day as a composer, conductor, and teacher. Bruch held various posts as a choral and orchestral conductor in Cologne, Coblenz, Berlin, Liverpool, and Breslau.

Though Bruch is known mainly for three famous compositions (the G minor Concerto and the "Scottish Fantasy" for violin, and the "Kol Nidrei" for cello), he also composed two other violin concertos, three symphonies, a concerto for two pianos, various chamber pieces, songs, three operas, and numerous choral works.

Bruch composed his *Eight Pieces* originally for clarinet, viola, and piano, in 1909, in his 70th year, for his son Max Felix, a talented clarinetist who also inspired his father to compose the *Double*

Concerto (Op. 88) for clarinet and viola.

Like Brahms' late works for clarinet, the *Eight Pieces* favor rich, mellow, instrumental hues in the alto range of the instrument and an autumnal maturity of expression, deeply felt but purged of excess.

In this composition, the clarinet and cello are evenly matched, singing together in duet or conversing in dialogue, while the piano serves as an accompanying partner. Bruch intended that the *Eight Pieces* be regarded as a set of independent miniatures of various styles rather than as an integrated cycle, and advised against playing all of them together in concert.

All the miniatures are in minor keys with the exception of the 7th. Though Bruch was fond of incorporating folk music into his concert works, only the 5th movement entitled "Rumanian Melody" includes a folk tune.

The *Eight Pieces* display lyricism with rhapsodic treatment of the melody, and the compositions epitomize those aspects of Romantic expression, which glorified the sensual, the emotive, and the sentimental.

Desire and Longing: Astor Piazzolla, *Le Grand Tango* for Cello and Piano (1982)

Argentine composer Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992) composed *Le Grand Tango* in 1982 for Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich and had it published in Paris - thus its French title.

Piazzolla studied composition in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, who encouraged him to pursue composing tangos rather than solely classical compositions. Taking her words to heart, he began experimenting with the standard Argentine tango, diverging from the expected Latin harmonies and producing an edgier sound, thus creating the spirit of nuevo tango ("new tango").

This was a melding of traditional tango rhythms and jazz-inspired syncopations, daring harmonies, spiky dissonances, as well as glissandi (slides up and down the fingerboard), and dramatic mood variations.

Le Grand Tango is a rhapsody for cello and piano requiring a high degree of virtuosity by the performers. Though played without pause, the work is comprised of three sections. The first “tempo di tango,” is rhythmically strident, alternating anger, longing and tenderness.

The second, “libero e cantabile,” is a lyrical melancholy song, and the third, “giocoso,” is a return to the rhythmic insistence of the first, with a wonderful bluesy part for the piano, building in tempo and intensity to a grand final climax.

Loss and Grief: Samuel Barber, Adagio for Strings Op. 11 (1936)

American composer Samuel Barber (1910-1981) was a child prodigy. He began composing at the age of 7, attempted his first opera at age 10 and, having learnt piano, organ and voice, gained a place at the Curtis Institute of Music at just 14.

Barber began composing seriously in his late teen years writing a flurry of successful compositions, which launched him into the spotlight of the classical music community. Many of his compositions were commissioned or premiered by such famous artists as Vladimir Horowitz, Francis Poulenc, and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau.

The *Adagio for Strings*, rewritten for string orchestra in 1938, is performed here in its original form as the third movement of his *String Quartet*, dated 1936.

The work begins with a feeling of poignant melancholy and suppressed anguish, which slowly develops into an intense outpouring of emotions.

As soon as it reaches its most passionate moment, this emotion is reined in, and the calm sadness of the beginning returns, drawing the work to a close.

This is one of the most moving pieces of music written in the twentieth century. It was performed at the funerals of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Leonard Bernstein and Prince Rainier of Monaco, and at a commemoration ceremony at the World Trade Center for the victims of the September 11 attacks.

What makes the emotions in this composition so powerful is the universality of the grieving process: sadness, expressed by a simple note, grows into a high emotional wailing that releases into final acceptance. This slowness is at the core of the piece because grieving is not a rapid process.

Passion and Exuberance: Maurice Ravel, String quartet in F major (1903)

Though inspired structurally by Claude Debussy's *String Quartet*, written ten years earlier, Ravel composed a very personal work which Debussy admired more than did its dedicatee, Ravel's composition teacher Gabriel Fauré.

Ravel followed a direction he described as "opposite to that of Debussy's symbolism", abandoning "the vagueness and formlessness of the early French impressionists in favor of a return to classic standards." The work stands out for its spontaneity, youthful freshness and spirited gaiety.

1. Allegro moderato – très doux (very soft)

The movement is in traditional sonata form, based on two contrasting themes. The first, a simple lullaby-like melody rising and falling through a long arc, is played by all four players at the opening and taken over by the first violin, accompanied by scalar harmonies in the lower instruments.

The second theme is more reflective and anxious in character, with occasional accelerandi and big sudden crescendi gaining intensity before the recapitulation. The movement ends with a return to innocence and peace.

2. Assez vif – très rythmé (rather fast- very rhythmic)

As in Debussy's quartet, the scherzo is the second movement, and opens with a pizzicato passage. This first theme is in the Aeolian mode, suggesting the influence of the Javanese gamelan, which had greatly impressed both Debussy and Ravel when heard in Paris in 1889.

Others hear in it echoes of Ravel's Spanish heritage, as well as his use of cross rhythms which add zest, but also difficulty for the performers: simultaneous 'threes against twos', similar to 'I like to be in America', in Bernstein's *West Side Story*.

3. Très lent --very slow

Despite the marking "very slow", the third movement has numerous changes of tempo and emotion. The music is rhapsodic and lyrical; written in such complex keys as G flat minor with six flats, another added challenge to string players!

There are strong thematic links with the first movement, and, in defiance of orthodox rules of harmony, conspicuous use of consecutive fifths. With the use of tremolos, fast triplet flurries, and an improvisational feel, Ravel creates a dreamy tonal magic.

4. Vif et agité---quick and agitated

The opening bars are a stormy, chromatically-spinning 5-note motif with dramatic tremolos. The movement alternates 4/4 and $\frac{3}{4}$ time signatures. After brief moments of calm, including a reference to the first theme of the opening movement, the turbulence of the opening bars of the finale reasserts itself, and the work ends in an explosion of fireworks.

The Musicians

AUDE CASTAGNA, cellist and artistic director, was born and raised in Paris. She studied music at several conservatories there and graduated with highest cello performance degree. She attended summer master classes all over Europe with famous cellists André Navarra, Arto Noras, and M. Perreny.

In 1995, she settled in Santa Cruz for its natural beauty and its dynamic musical life. Aude became a Teaching Assistant and principal cellist at UCSC and obtained a MA in Music Performance in 1997. She taught music privately and at Cabrillo College for 15 years.

Aude founded the Paris String Quartet in 1995, and performs frequently for private and public events. She also produced the Santa Cruz Cello Festival in 2013 featuring cello repertoire and performers of varied musical styles.

She conducts a cello orchestra, The Cello Choir, and arranges pieces for her group, which performs in the community. Though featured as a soloist with local orchestras in the past, she is more frequently heard in chamber music recitals at the Santa Cruz Public Library or with the Santa Cruz Chamber Players.

Aude also enjoys the challenges of contemporary music, jazz and improvisation. Her performances have been aired on KUSP radio and Santa Cruz Community TV.

In addition to her active music life, Aude is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and has a busy private practice in Downtown Santa Cruz helping adults, children and couples increase their quality of life.

Shannon Delaney, violin, grew up in Northern Virginia, beginning as a Suzuki student and later studying with members of the National Symphony Orchestra. She holds a B.A. degree in Violin Performance from Stanford University.

Shannon performs regularly with many local ensembles, including Ensemble Monterey Chamber Orchestra, Cabrillo Stage, The Western Stage, Santa Cruz New Music Works, and Monterey Pops.

In addition, Shannon holds a M.A. degree in Education from the University of California, Santa Cruz and is currently a public school teacher at Westlake Elementary School in Santa Cruz, where she has been a faculty member since 2005.

Eleanor Angel, viola

Eleanor Angel is a member of Symphony Silicon Valley and Principal Viola of the San Jose Chamber Orchestra. She has performed with Pasadena Chamber Orchestra, Bay Chamber Orchestras; the former San Jose Symphony, Honolulu Symphony, and San Francisco Symphony; and the Opera companies of West Bay, San Jose and San Francisco.

Ms. Angel has participated in the Music Festivals at Tanglewood, Yale-Norfolk, Prussia Cove- England, Trogen-Switzerland, Perugia and Siena-Italy, as well as the Music in the Mountains Festival, Desert Foothills Musicfest, Midsummer Mozart Festival, the Monterey Jazz Festival and the Cabrillo Festival.

She is a founding member of the Sunrise Quartet and the Pegasus Quartet, and currently plays for the San Francisco Symphony's "Adventures in Music" program with the Madrone Quartet.

She received her Bachelors degree from Indiana University, under Georges Janzer, followed by a year of private study with William Primrose. She earned her Master's degree from the Eastman School of Music, under Atar Arad.

A native of Russia, **Vlada Volkova-Moran** holds diplomas from the Moscow Lenin Pedagogical University and the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory as a piano teacher, accompanist, music educator and performing artist.

Vlada moved to America in 1998. She works as an organist at Peace United Church of Christ, and serves as a main organist for the Diocesan Choir of Monterey. She is also a principal accompanist for Cabrillo Symphonic Choir and Temple Beth El Choir.

Vlada has toured Europe with the Cabrillo Symphonic Choir, appeared in concerts with the Santa Cruz Chorale, Ariose Singers, UCSC Concert Choir, Monterey Chamber Orchestra, Cadenza Orchestra, and with many other local singers and instrumentalists.

A lover of chamber music, Vlada often performs with the Santa Cruz Chamber Players, and she is a member of the Loma Prieta Ensemble and the Celebrated Piano Ensemble. Vlada has performed many organ recitals in Santa Cruz and the larger Bay Area. She has been featured as a solo artist with the Santa Cruz Baroque Festival, and is the founder and artistic director of the annual New Year's Eve "Organists Kaleidophone" concert series in Santa Cruz.

Vlada also runs a large piano studio in Santa Cruz and teaches organ privately.

Jeff Gallagher, clarinet, has lived in the Santa Cruz area for over 22 years. During this time he has greatly enjoyed working regularly with a wide variety of musical ensembles, including the Santa Cruz Chamber Players; the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music with Marin Alsop; the Monterey Jazz Festival; the Carmel Bach Festival; San Jose Stage; Ensemble Monterey with John Anderson; the Monterey Bay Symphony; Carmel's Pacific Rep Theater; the Western Stage in Salinas; Cabrillo Stage; New Music Works with Phil Collins; the Camerata Singers; Cantiamo! with Cheryl Anderson; Mountain Community Theater; the Peninsula Clarinet Quartet; West Bay Opera; Bay Shore Lyric Opera; and the Violetto Trio.

Jeff studied clarinet at Ohio State University with Dr. Robert Titus, and at Bowling Green State University with Ed Marks. In addition to clarinet, Jeff also performs on flute, oboe, English horn, bass clarinet and soprano, alto, and tenor saxophones.

Jeff has worked for the Intel Manycore Testing Lab, working with universities throughout the world, enabling them to modernize their software programming curricula.