

🦋 Notes About The Program 🦋

Bohuslav Martinu

TRIO for flute, cello, and piano (1944)

The Bohemian composer Bohuslav Martinu's life easily could have made his outlook dark. He lived in poverty in Paris, barely escaped the Nazis, spent many years in exile in the United States, and pined for his homeland, Czechoslovakia, from which he was barred by the Communist government. Yet the hundreds of compositions that he wrote over the years – including today's Trio – are marked by a hard-to-resist vitality, optimism, originality, and *joie de vivre*. Formal classrooms were not for him. He was drummed out of the Prague Conservatory for "incorrigible negligence." But Paris, where he moved in 1923, was invigorating. He spent 17 years there, absorbing French modernism, jazz and neo-classicism, but also rediscovering his Czech roots.

In 1941, when the Nazis invaded Paris, Martinu fled to the United States. Serge Koussevitzky, the conductor of the Boston Symphony and a Martinu enthusiast, helped him get settled with a commission to write his *First Symphony* at the famous summer music academy at Tanglewood. This symphony was the first of many new compositions that won Martinu a large and enthusiastic American audience. Martinu went on to teach at Mannes, Princeton, and Curtis, before moving back to Europe in 1956.

Martinu wrote the *Trio for Flute, Cello, and Piano* in a holiday spirit during a New England summer, just after he finished his *Third Symphony*. It is an animated work propelled by Martinu's distinctive musical voice. Among its highlights are the rhythmic inventiveness that drives

the sunny first movement, with the three instruments exchanging brief rhythmic passages as they playfully chase one another; a meditative Adagio that is filled with yearning; an infectious finale in which Martinu continues to show his adeptness at writing for the flute; and throughout, rich harmonies and tonal colors, as well as hints of jazz and Czech folk rhythms. Virgil Thomson loved the *Trio*, calling it "a gem of bright sound and cheerful sentiment. It is tonally perfect, it sounds well, it feels good, it is clearly the work of a fine jewelry maker and it does not sound like any other music."

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Mikhail Glinka

TRIO PATHÉTIQUE

for clarinet, cello, and piano (1827)

Glinka's *Trio Pathétique*, scored for the unusual combination of clarinet, bassoon or cello, and piano, dates from 1832, when the twenty eight-year-old composer was studying in Milan and still emulating Italy's operatic composers.

With this trio of expressive instruments, and still under the spell of Donizetti, Glinka is giving us a little opera with all the proper thrills and drama.

The trio bears Glinka's epitaph: "Je n' ai connu l' amour que par les peines qu' il cause/ I knew the love only by the sorrows which it causes". Aww!

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Writing this trio, Glinka hadn't yet found his Russian voice, but he did very soon after, when he returned to Russia and started using national folk tunes and harmonies in his compositions.

Like an opera overture with the curtain rising, the *Trio* opens with a bold, dramatic gesture, immediately repeated. Then the characters are presented: first the clarinet's alto voice, with a cantabile melody, then taken on by the cello. A climax, a pause, and an expectant passage of triplets lead to the subsidiary subject, a lyrical duet sung by clarinet and cello. The formal development section is omitted – a Rossini trick in his overtures – and the recapitulation of the earlier themes proceeds immediately after a brief, though dramatic, silence. The movement ends on an inconclusive harmony, leaving the listener in a lurch before launching into the Scherzo, a playful affair nicely balanced by a lilting central trio. Again the music breaks off abruptly, and a passage of ominous chords – worthy of a title such as *La Forza del destino* – leads to the Largo, a wordless operatic scene in three verses sung first by the clarinet, then by the cello, and finally

together. The finale comprises four succinct episodes: an aggressive fugue-like introduction whose tumbling triplets hark back to the first movement; an agitated conversation between the clarinet and cello (more triplets); a recall of the dramatic gesture that opened the work; and a passionate coda of troubled emotions.

Expect no less drama when you mix Russian character with Italian *Bel Canto* sparked by a torrid heartbreak! See his epitaph above!



Heitor Villa-Lobos

ASSOBIO A JATO ('THE JET WHISTLE') (1950)

Heitor Villa-Lobos is said to have been “the single most significant creative figure in 20th-century Brazilian art music, by creating a unique compositional style that combines contemporary European techniques and reinterprets elements of national music”.

The three movement fantasy piece for flute and cello, *Assobio a Jato* ('The Jet Whistle'), was written in 1950 in

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New York and was dedicated to Elizabeth and Carleton Sprague Smith (flautist and musicologist). It continues Villa-Lobos's predilection for writing duets for high and low-voiced instruments.

The piece is primarily a musical experiment, playing on the natural characteristics of both instruments, featuring an often chirping bird-like flute, and a moaning and laboring cello. From the opening notes of the Allegro, Villa-Lobos plays with the instrumental contrasts, as the flute chirps over the cello's long, low lines. When the two reverse roles, the flute becomes flamboyant while the cello accompaniment starts the waltz. The mood changes in the second-movement Adagio, where the flute's nostalgic melody intertwines with the cello's dissonant and jazzy counterpoint. In a boisterous finale, the cello eggs on the flute, which charges higher and higher in a series of pyrotechnic runs until the flutist blasts air into the mouthpiece – a screech that reminded Villa-Lobos of a jet engine on takeoff. Hence the title.

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Carl Maria von Weber
TRIO in G minor, J259
for flute, cello and piano (1819)

On 25 July 1819 Weber completed the *Trio*, in Hosterwitz, his peaceful summer residence on the Elbe above Dresden. The work's inspiration may have been a souvenir of convivial musical evenings during Weber's Prague years, from 1813 to 1816, which he spent with two of his closest friends, a cellist and flautist.

As often with Weber, the musical architecture, though classical, is highly personal.

The opening movement is free from the formal sonata form. It is melodically rich, with a graceful opening theme and a gentle second subject, a figure in octaves between cello and piano that comes to dominate the entire movement. Though the warm and impassioned development section begins with the second subject, it is with the opening theme that the movement ends.

The Scherzo has no real trio section, but contrasts a violent, drumming theme in the minor with a graceful major-key flute melody. It is, however, the pounding piano octave theme that concludes the movement.

The third movement's title 'Schäfers Klage' ('Shepherd's Lament') refers to Goethe's poem of 1802 about a lovelorn shepherd, set by many composers including Schubert. The Schubert was published in 1804 in a collection of guitar songs, upon which Weber based his subtly improved melody and guitar-like piano chords.

The Finale thrills the listener with its profusion of themes and extreme contrasts, and that are where the essence of the whole work lies.

Even within a classical framework, Weber's Romantic imagination is running high.



Paquito D'Rivera
DANZON for trio (2003)
CONRADANZA for clarinet and piano (1991)

Paquito D'Rivera (b. June 4, 1948, Havana) is a Cuban-born, Grammy-winning jazz and classical saxophonist and clarinetist. By age five, Paquito was a musical prodigy. His first teacher was his father, a well-known classical saxophonist and conductor in Cuba. At a young age, D'Rivera played saxophone and clarinet in the Cuban National Symphony Orchestra. At age seven, Paquito became the youngest artist ever to endorse a musical instrument when he signed on with the famous brass instrument maker Selmer. He defected from Cuba to the US in 1981.

D'Rivera's expertise transcends musical genres: performing and composing both for jazz and classical music with groups and orchestras all over the world, which led to his recording dozens of albums. By 2003, he had six Grammy Awards to his credit in both classical and jazz categories.

D'Rivera authored a book of memoirs called *Mi Vida Saxual* (My Sax Life), published in Spain in 2000, a testimony to his vibrant personality.