

from *Three Madrigals*

Bohuslav Martinů (1890–1959)

Bohuslav Martinů was born in 1890 in Policka, a small town in the Bohemian-Moravian highlands. As a child, Martinů showed great promise as a violinist and was composing as a young teen. With the help of funds raised by his local community, he was sent to the Prague Conservatory to study. Although he did not perform well academically as a student, Martinů was earning his living as an orchestral violinist and attending performances of a broad range of music, which would have a profound influence on his development as a composer.

In 1923 Martinů moved to Paris and began studies with Albert Roussel, one of many within the circle of the French composers influenced by Gabriel Fauré. In 1923 he married Charlotte Quennechen, with whom he fled to the United States in 1940 at the time of the Nazi invasion of France.

In the summer of 1946, while teaching at Tanglewood, Martinů fell and fractured his skull. He suffered severe headaches, tinnitus, and bouts of depression during his two years of recuperation. As he gradually returned to composing, Martinů focused for a time on chamber music, and it was during this period that he composed the *Three Madrigals for Violin and Viola*.

In the first Madrigal, Martinů immediately displays the strengths of the violin and viola, in both lyrical and rhythmically charged passages, giving them equal roles. The sonic breadth that Martinů achieves with just these two instruments rivals the sound of many string quartets. The duo shuttles back and forth between big, unified sounds and playfully trading phrases with one another. Following the rhythmic vigor of the opening measures, Martinů introduces a long-breathed melody, first in the violin above sixteenth-note figurations in the viola and then vice versa. The remainder of the Poco Allegro relies on the melodic and rhythmic ideas introduced in its first few bars, but Martinů conjures a thrilling dramatic arc by developing those ideas and by varying textures. Cynthia Baehr-Williams



Three Pieces for Viola and Piano

Nadia Boulanger (1887–1979)

Juliette Nadia Boulanger was a French composer, conductor, and an internationally renowned teacher. Boulanger entered the Paris Conservatory at age nine, where she studied composition with Gabriel Fauré. In 1903 she won the Conservatory's first prize in harmony. The next year she won first prize in three categories: organ, accompaniment, and composition. Much to the disappointment of Fauré, Boulanger turned her focus to teaching both as a means of supporting her family and because she believed she "wrote useless music."

As a teacher, Boulanger influenced generations of composers, conductors, and soloists. Some of her most notable students were Aaron Copland, Daniel Barenboim, Elliott Carter, Philip Glass, Darius Milhaud, Astor Piazzolla, and Virgil Thomson. Boulanger had an immense amount of wisdom and knowledge to share. She is quoted as saying, "I can't provide anyone with inventiveness, nor can I take it away; I can simply provide the liberty to read, to listen, to see, to understand." Copland described her near-encyclopedic knowledge of music this way: "Nadia Boulanger knew everything there was to know about music; she knew the oldest and the latest music, pre-Bach, and post-Stravinsky. All technical know-how was at her fingertips: harmonic transposition, the figured bass, score reading, organ registration, instrumental techniques, structural analyses, the school fugue and the free fugue, the

Greek modes, and Gregorian chant.”

Three Pieces was composed initially for organ in 1911 and transcribed by Boulanger in 1914 for cello and piano. It was later transcribed for viola and piano. The style is best described as post-impressionist and is heavily influenced by the music of Debussy and her mentor, Fauré. The first piece is delicate and mysterious. The second, a peaceful lament. The final piece provides a stark contrast with a frenetic energy that aims to imitate the pace of modern life

Kristin Garbeff



Romance for cello and Piano in F Major, Op. 36

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921)

Saint-Saëns, the French composer best known for *Carnival of the Animals* and the opera *Samson and Delilah*, had a deep and enduring impact on the development of French music. As a child prodigy, Saint-Saëns made his public debut at age 10, performing at the Salle Pleyel in Paris. He went on to study at the Paris Conservatoire and then on to a secure position as a church organist. In 1861, he accepted a teaching position at the École Niedermeyer de Paris. It was a position he held for only five years, but the impact of those years had ripple effects that would last for generations. Saint-Saëns was a dedicated, passionate teacher who upended the very conservative teaching style of the school, which focused on church organ music, by introducing his students to contemporary composers such as Liszt, Wagner, and Schumann. His best-known student, Gabriel Fauré, expressed “unceasing gratitude” to Saint-Saëns for introducing the teenager to the contemporary masters.

The relationship between Saint-Saëns and Fauré developed into a deep friendship that lasted sixty years. In the more than 130 pieces of correspondence that have survived, we see that they discussed everything from admiration of each other’s works to their varying opinions on other composers and artists, the state of music education, to the political strife occurring in Europe.

Romance Op. 36 in F Major, written in 1874 for horn and orchestra, was published later in the same year for cello and orchestra. It is a waltz-like piece in ternary form (ABA) that highlights the warm timbre of the cello with long, lyrical lines. A more passionate middle section gracefully transitions back to the calm, lilting waltz.

Kristin Garbeff



Intermezzo

Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967)

Hungarian composer Zoltán Kodály was born in 1882 to parents who were amateur musicians. He started violin lessons at a young age, sang in a cathedral choir, and started composing despite having little formal musical education. Kodály studied modern languages when he entered the University of Budapest and began his serious musical training in composition with Hans Koessler at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music.

Kodály was among the first to collect and study folk music and wrote a thesis on the Hungarian folk song. This led to his stature as a well-known ethnomusicologist. Béla Bartók introduced him to the wider world of folk music, which would become central to both of their compositional backgrounds, and the two remained friends throughout their lifetimes.

After earning his Ph.D. in linguistics and philosophy, Kodály went to Paris to study composition with Charles Widor. (This was 1905 when Fauré was appointed to be director of the Paris Conservatory.) There Kodály discovered and absorbed various influences of the composers of the time, ranging from Saint-Saëns to Fauré and on to Ravel, Boulanger, and others from this period which we know as

French Impressionism in music.

The *Intermezzo* is an early work of Kodály and simple in contrast to the masterworks he would write later in his life after reaching full maturity as a composer. The principal themes reflect his early interest in the Hungarian folk melody. A simple A-B-A form, the piece has the character of a relaxed serenade. The A section presents an elegant theme played over moving pizzicato, suggesting a zither (a plucked string instrument common in central Europe). The more lyrical B section reaches an emotional climax before returning to the lovely and now-familiar opening melody.

Cynthia Baehr-Williams



Three Nocturnes

Ernest Bloch (1880–1959)

Nocturnes are “night music”—romantic character pieces that depict moods of the evening or night: quiet, reflective, or perhaps romantic and melancholy works, and can even characterize restlessness and fantasy.

Ernest Bloch was born in Switzerland and took advanced studies in Germany and France; he emigrated to the United States in 1916. In 1924 he became a naturalized citizen. In his new American home, Bloch was an influential teacher and composer who held significant positions at many American institutions, including the founding director of the Cleveland Conservatory of Music (1920–25), the director of the San Francisco Conservatory (1925–30), and as a professor at the University of California, Berkeley (1940–52), before retiring. For all these reasons and more, Bloch is usually considered an American composer of Swiss origin. His close friends considered Bloch to be a man of great passion, with strong inner faith and a great humanitarian spirit that transcended any borders of faith, nation, or race. Among Bloch’s close friends was Nadia Boulanger, a student of Gabriel Fauré and the composition teacher of Bloch’s daughter.

Bloch, especially known for his Jewish-themed works, composed several pieces inspired by the Bible and Hebraic culture. But Bloch’s musical personality comprises much more: he also paid musical homage to nature, Switzerland, the Alps, America, urban life, and even Chinatown, using various materials from folksong, Amerindian sources, civil war songs, and spirituals.

Bloch wrote the *Three Nocturnes* for piano trio in 1924, just before he moved to San Francisco while serving as director of the newly formed Cleveland Institute of Music. The first “Andante” movement depicts a tranquil and mysterious night that highlights Bloch’s impressionistic tendencies with “exotic” scales and ethereal sonorities. The second nocturne, “Andante Quietto,” is a tender lullaby built with long, expressive phrases. The third nocturne is true to Bloch’s “Tempestoso” marking with an impetuous and stormy opening, followed by a return to the second nocturne’s theme before concluding with the movement’s opening night chase.

Kumi Uyeda



Piano Quartet in C minor op. 15

Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)

Fauré wrote the *Piano Quartet in C Minor* during his “early period,” when he was struggling to make a living as an organist and piano teacher. Although he was renowned as an organist and improviser, Fauré considered the piano his instrument of choice. (Saint-Saëns said Fauré was “a first class organist when he wanted to be”),

On Valentine’s Day in 1880, Gabriel Fauré played the piano for the premiere of the *Piano Quartet*

in C Minor. He was 35 years old. The quartet was actually composed a few years prior, between 1876 and 1879, during an emotionally charged time. In 1872, he had met and had fallen deeply in love with Marianne Viardot, the daughter of the famous contralto and composer Pauline Viardot. Despite Marianne's shyness, Fauré persisted in his attentions for nearly five years, and in July 1877, the couple finally became engaged. It seems, however, that Fauré's passion was unreciprocated, for Marianne broke off the engagement within four months and afterward confessed that she had found her fiancé more intimidating than endearing. To distract Fauré from his distress over the break-up, Saint-Saëns took him to Weimar and introduced him to Franz Liszt, which sparked Fauré's interest in both foreign travel and Wagner's operas, both of which he indulged for the rest of his life. Fauré had no intention of remaining a bachelor and later agreed to an arranged marriage. A friend found three potential brides but unable to make up his mind, Fauré finally wrote their names on slips of paper, placed them in a hat, and randomly picked the name of Marie Fremiet, the daughter of a sculptor. They married and had two children.

Saint-Saëns was Fauré's teacher beginning during Fauré's teenage years (piano and composition) at the École Niedermeyer de Paris, and became Fauré's mentor and lifelong friend. Saint-Saëns introduced Fauré to the soirées of Pauline Viardot and the fashionable Paris society. It was also through Saint-Saëns that Fauré joined the newly formed Société Nationale de Musique Française in 1871, where he became acquainted with Franck, d'Indy, Lalo, Bizet, Duparc and other prominent French musicians. His piano *Piano Quartet in C Minor* premiered in 1880 at a Société Nationale de Musique Française concert.

It was also through Saint-Saëns, a decade later in 1892, that Fauré acquired a position at the Paris Conservatoire as the inspector of the music conservatories in the French provinces. Fauré received the appointment of professor of composition at the Paris Conservatoire four years later and taught many young composers, including Maurice Ravel, George Enescu, Nadia Boulanger, and Lili Boulanger. Fauré eventually became the Director of the Paris Conservatoire in 1905.

The first movement (Allegro molto moderato) of the *Quartet in C minor* is in a fairly conventional sonata form. Even so, one should not expect a powerful, closely argued drama à la Beethoven. Fauré is a lyricist, and the melodic evolution is continuous from the first to last bar.

The Scherzo (Allegro vivo) is a gloriously lighthearted affair. Frequent alternations between 6/8 and 2/4 add a touch of humor. This movement contains muted strings that introduce an element of sobriety in the central trio section, but the piano's rippling triplets deflate their efforts. This movement has been described as "a buzzing of fairy insects on a moonbeam in a Shakespearean glade."

The Adagio is one of Fauré's finest slow movements. Here one gains more than a hint of his feelings during the heartbreaking year of 1877. Nevertheless, the emotion is always nobly restrained, with not even the slightest hint of self-indulgence. The solemn opening theme would not be out of place in a liturgical work (parts of the *Requiem* were also written during 1877). Still, the conciliatory coda has a quality of intimacy appropriate only to chamber music.

The energetic Finale that concludes the piece in today's concert is not the music that premiered in 1880. Fauré was dissatisfied with the original Finale, and he rewrote it "from top to toe" in 1883. The original Finale is believed to have been destroyed by Fauré in later years. The new version was premiered in 1884 with Fauré at the piano, and the *Quartet in C minor* was published in its present form in 1884. Somewhat reminiscent of a Mazurka in its vigor, the Finale builds to an exciting climax to conclude one of the most beloved works of the piano quartet repertoire.

Kumi Uyeda