



“The art of writing program notes, demonstrated here by David Daniels’ delightful notes for CSD’s 2015-16 opening concerts!”

~ Pauline Martin

**Max Bruch (1838-1920)
from Eight Pieces for Clarinet, Viola, & Piano, op. 83**

Andante
Allegro agitato
Andante con moto
Allegro vivace ma non troppo

Max Felix Bruch was the son of the celebrated composer Max Christian Friedrich Bruch. The son turned out to be a superb clarinetist—so what’s a proud Papa to do? In the case of Max C. F. Bruch, the answer was obvious: write a piece for your prodigious son!

It turned out to be eight pieces, in fact, composed in 1910 when the father was 72. Max *père* was a prolific composer of choral music, though in fact, 95 years after his death, it is his concertos and orchestral music that live on in numerous performances. Still, in the characteristically exploratory tradition of Chamber Soloists of Detroit, it is great to hear some little-known gems of chamber music.

**Aram Khachaturian (1903-1978)
Trio for Clarinet, Violin, & Piano**

Andante con dolore
Allegro
Moderato

Khachaturian's 1932 trio, composed while still a student, was championed by none other than Prokofiev, who arranged for a performance in Paris—and even publication—shortly after it was written. As a young Armenian composer, Khachaturian was caught up in the nationalist spirit of the time, represented most strongly by the Hungarians Bartók and Kodály, who sought to find their national identity and genuine musical style through a study of folk music.

Indeed the folk element is strong throughout this trio. In the first movement one can easily imagine the three musicians engaging in a sort of jam session in a late-night cafe. They alternately take turns, and then engage in furious displays of virtuosity: "can you top this?"



The second movement shows elements of folk dances throughout, and the third is a set of variations on an Uzbekistani folk song, starting oh so tentatively in the clarinet, and, after running the gamut of emotions, ending in almost the same way.

INTERMISSION

Fryderyk Franciszek Chopin (1810-1849) **Polonaise-Fantasy, op. 61**

What word comes first to mind when Chopin is mentioned? "Piano," many would say, and indeed a huge proportion of his *oeuvre* was written for that instrument. In fact, the piano has a prominent role in every piece he ever wrote! No string quartets, no *a cappella* masses, no operas...

But I would propose that the word that describes him best is "original." He took the forms and styles of his time and made each of them new. And within each of those forms and styles, he couldn't help but be original from one piece to the next. 62 mazurkas, and each of them distinct! 27 etudes, 27 waltzes, 26 preludes, 16 polonaises—and even a "Galop Marquis" (named after the little dog belonging to Chopin's lover, George Sand).

The Polonaise-Fantasy we hear this afternoon is a very late work. In a letter to his parents Chopin wrote that he was working on three pieces: a cello sonata, a barcarolle, "... and something else I don't know how to name." That "something else" he finally named a Polonaise-Fantasy. It has little whiffs and hints of the traditional polonaise rhythms, but they often seem to be veiled, or perhaps backstage.

Quite aside from the overall conception of the piece, notice the originality, here as everywhere, of Chopin's harmonic imagination; how his chords find always the most surprising resolution, while still remaining in touch with the prevailing key. In this sense, he anticipates Wagner.

Chopin is sometimes disparaged as a lightweight because he didn't write any big symphonies. Well, the orchestra simply didn't interest him. His struggles and insights with harmony and form and melody could all be worked out within the medium of the keyboard. His originality never flagged.



Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)
Suite from *L'Histoire du soldat* (The Soldier's Tale)

The Soldier's March
The Soldier's Violin
A Little Concert
Tango – Waltz – Ragtime
The Devil's Dance

It is rarely given to any composer to write a work that changes the history of music. Stravinsky wrote two such. In 1913 his notorious ballet *The Rite of Spring* burst upon the scene, utilizing a huge orchestra to set ablaze dense thickets of rhythm and harmony and, at the premiere, caused a riot in the streets of Paris.

And five years later, he did it again! No more dense thickets. *L'Histoire du soldat* was as lean and spare as a whip, and equally stinging. Just seven instruments: 2 strings, 2 woodwinds, 2 brass, and a very busy percussionist. Neoclassicism was born! And then, as though that weren't iconoclastic enough, he made a suite out of it for an even smaller group: violin, clarinet, and piano. We hear that suite today.

The story of "The Soldier's Tale" has some elements of the Faust legend. A soldier, returning from World War I, trades his prize possession (his violin... or is it his soul?) to the devil for a book that foretells the future. He goes home with the devil for three days in order to learn how to use the book, but when he returns to his village he discovers that he has actually been gone three years!

Through a ruse he wins back his violin from the devil, and by playing it, restores to health a dying princess! The princess, rehabilitated, joyously begins to dance to his playing: a tango, a waltz, even a ragtime! Even the devil is subject to the power of the violin: the soldier's playing causes the devil to dance himself to exhaustion. Thus endeth the Suite, but in the full work the soldier, some years later, leaves the safety of the princess' castle to visit his home; once he is out the door the devil has him in his power again.

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