



UNIVERSITY OF  
THE THIRD AGE



*Programme Notes*

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## About Today's Music Selections

**George Gershwin's Piano Concerto in F** was the last successful attempt to meld serious and pop music. In the late 1800s, tunes from the latest operas were whistled in the streets, but as the 20th century wore on pop and art music parted ways. Enter George Gershwin. Having left high school for Tin Pan Alley, where he worked as a pianist plugging sheet music, at the same time moonlighting as an accompanist and dabbling in composition, he absorbed the writing and performing styles of his time.



Gershwin—Self-portrait, 1934

At the age of 20 he soared to fame with “Swanee,” a mega-hit for Al Jolson, and soon became established as a prolific and superbly talented songwriter, graduating to Broadway where he wrote a dozen shows by age 25. His 1924 composition “Rhapsody in Blue” was a sensation and, in turn, apparently, stoked his confidence and kindled his ambitions.

A suitable opportunity to prove himself as a serious composer soon came in a commission for a piano concerto from Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony Society. Gershwin accepted the challenge, in part to prove that the success of his Rhapsody in Blue was no fluke.

One year on from Rhapsody in Blue, the concerto was premiered by Gershwin at the piano with the New York Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Walter Damrosch. The conductor described Gershwin as “the Prince who has taken Cinderella [jazz] by the hand and openly proclaimed her a princess to the astonished world, no doubt to the fury of her envious sisters”.

If Gershwin's concerto was a sensation at the time, perhaps it's appropriate to hear it from the hands of a young Russian pianist who has become something of a sensation himself in his few short years. His name is Alexander Malofeev who first came to prominence at the 8th International Tchaikovsky Competition in 2014, where he won first prize - at the age of 13.

By the time he reached the age of 15, young Alexander had performed in Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory, Mariinsky Theatre, State Kremlin Palace, Teatro alla Scala in Milan, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Philharmonie de Paris, Tokyo Bunka Kaikan, Shanghai Oriental Art Centre, National Centre for the Performing Arts in China and the Kaufman Music Centre.

In 2016 he won the Grand Prix at the international Grand Piano Competition in Moscow. In 2017 he received the prize “To Young Musical Talent” at the International Piano Festival in Brescia and Bergamo and the title of “Young Yamaha Artist”.



Alexander Malofeev

Also In June 2016 Master Performers released the performer's debut solo disc, recorded in Australia at the Queensland Conservatorium in Brisbane.

Since 2019 he has studied at the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory and is a scholarship-holder of the Vladimir Spivakov International Charity Foundation and the International New Names Charity Foundation.

After a performance at the Mariinsky International Piano Festival, noted Russian conductor Valery Gergiev (he is the Artistic & General Director of the Mariinsky Theatre) stated “Alexander Malofeev is a considerable musician. I would like his future to develop as forcefully as he joined our impetuous and highly dynamic musical life. It happens a great deal of things in Saint Petersburg, sometimes even great artists remain unmentioned, but Alexander has stuck in the mind at once.....”



Mikail Pletnev & Alexander Malofeev

The performance we hear was recorded in December 2019 in Moscow at the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall. The Russian National Orchestra is conducted by Valery Gergiev. After rapturous applause Alexander Malofeev played, as an encore, the Andante Maestoso (The Pas de Deux) from the Nutcracker Suite, as arranged for piano by Pletnev, while Pletnev himself was listening. Clearly an intentional sign by Alexander of his respect for the conductor.

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In 1914, with the encouragement of his music publisher, Claude Debussy set out to compose a cycle of Six Sonatas for Various Instruments with the last sonata combining the previously used instruments. The project was undertaken at a time Debussy suffered from terminal cancer. Only three Sonatas were completed at the time of his death on March 25, 1918—the Cello Sonata, the Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp, and the Violin Sonata.

Chamber music for flute, viola, and harp is certainly one of the most attractive of settings. Debussy initially planned this sonata, however, as a piece for flute, oboe and harp. He subsequently decided that the viola's timbre would be a better combination for the flute than the oboe's, so he changed the instrumentation to flute, viola and harp. The instrumentation would later become a standard ensemble grouping.



Claude Debussy

Considering this instrumentation, **the Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp by Claude Debussy** is the first work recalled by many and has become one of the most important chamber works of the 20th century. Composed in 1915— it is probably the first major work for this combination.

The Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp floats into a magical dreamscape which feels emotionally detached and ambiguous. Simultaneously melancholy and joyful, it seems to exist in a world beyond emotion. The music just is. In attempting to describe the piece in a letter, Debussy touched on this strange quality when he wrote, “I can’t say whether one should laugh or cry. Perhaps both at the same time? (Timothy Judd - thelisteners’club.org)

The performance for our appreciation is by flautist Emmanuel Pahud, violist Yulia Deyneka and harpist Aline Khouri.

*Emmanuel Pahud is a Franco-Swiss flautist. He was born in 1970 in Geneva, Switzerland into a non-musical family –his father is of French and Swiss background and his mother is French. Emmanuel was captivated while a very young boy by the sound of the flute played by their neighbour. He told his parents, "I want to play the flute, I want to play the Mozart concerto that guy next door is practicing". From the age of four, Pahud was tutored and mentored by a number of accomplished flautists, including formal training at the Conservatoire de Paris.*



*He leapt into the international orchestral and solo music scene when he was appointed, at age 22, Principal Flute of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under Claudio Abbado – the youngest player in the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. He currently plays a 14-karat golden flute which he bought in 1989 with money he won from competitions.*

*As a dedicated chamber musician, he has recently made international appearances throughout Europe, North America and Japan and in 2017 toured Australia for a second time with Richard Tognetti and the Australian Chamber Orchestra.*

*While he is an enthusiastic consumer of new music, Pahud plays in diverse music genres– baroque, jazz, contemporary, classical, orchestral, as well as chamber music.*

*The violist Yulia Deyneka was born in 1982 on the island of Sakhalin off Russia's Pacific coast. She began playing violin at the age of seven and had her first lessons at the Gnessim Music Academy in Moscow. At the age of 14 she switched to viola and entered the Tchaikovsky Conservatory before moving to Germany in 2001 to complete her training in Berlin.*

*Deyneka been one of the builders of Daniel Barenboim's pioneering West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, which has united Arab and Israeli musicians (we will hear this orchestra in our final session this year). Barenboim has been one of her important mentors inviting her to perform for the first time with the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra in 2001, and subsequently appointing her to principal viola of the Berlin Staatskapelle in 2005 and of the Pierre Boulez Ensemble in 2016.*

*She supervised the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra's viola section for some years before going on to a position as a tenured professor at the orchestra's associated Barenboim-Said Academy in Spain where she taught from 2006–2011. Many of her students have since gone on to secure positions at orchestras in France, Germany and Spain.*



*Deyneka has remained a strong advocate of the development of young musicians and is an active mentor of the Staatskapelle Berlin's Orchestra Academy, where she mentors graduates of the orchestra academy. From autumn 2016, Deyneka became a permanent member of the Boulez Ensemble, which is based in the newly built Pierre Boulez Saal where the recording of this Debussy sonata was made.*



Harpist *Aline Khouri* has also been a member of Daniel Barenboim's West-Eastern Divan Orchestra for some years and became the first harpist of the orchestra in 2009. She says the subject that the orchestra and Daniel Barenboim deal with (seeking to encourage intercultural dialogue through music) is very relevant to her.

"The intensive rehearsal phases lasting several weeks during which the musicians work and live together give the musicians an opportunity to come to terms not only with one another, but also with their own origins and biographies. It is then not a matter of major conflicts like the one in the Middle East. You notice that it is about you and me and the question of

how we can and want to treat one another. That is fertile ground for constructive discussion and debate and for rethinking your own views".

Khouri now aged in her early 30s - she was born in Dresden in 1985 - grew up in Lebanon and studied piano from the age of six. Her father's forebears were Palestinian and her mother came from Crimea and Khouri herself holds both a German and a Lebanese passport.

After attending the Saxon Special School for Music "Carl Maria von Weber" in Dresden with the two main subjects harp and piano since 1998, she studied with the harp as major from 2005 to 2010 at the Academy of Music of the same name in Dresden.

Khouri, during her studies played in renowned orchestras in Dresden and Berlin and since has toured Europe and Asia with various orchestras to festivals such as the Bayreuth and Salzburg Festival or the BBC Proms and the Lucerne Festival. She was also able to participate in numerous chamber concerts, be it at the International Chamber Music Festival 2010 in Jerusalem and Buenos Aires or at other concerts in Berlin, London and Salzburg under the direction of Daniel Barenboim, Pierre Boulez and others.



*Pierre Boulez Saal* is the newest Berlin concert hall - opened in March 2017.. The project is the brainchild of multiple award-winning classical music royalty Daniel Barenboim and is set to become a place where world class concerts, creation and education meet.

The hall has a unique architectural profile, with its elliptical shape inviting audience and artists to become one community—there is no separation

here between stage and auditorium.

The space is also home to the Barenboim-Said Akademie, where students and faculty will perform. They also plan conferences and academic events here. While different orchestras and soloists will perform in the concert hall, the space is home to the newly formed Boulez Ensemble Orchestra.

**Beethoven's Violin Concerto** was commissioned by a violinist named Franz Clement of whom it was said was a peculiar combination of musician, virtuoso and circus clown. (Clement was also Conductor of Vienna's Theatre an der Wien). It is also said that Beethoven only finished the concerto right before the concert and that Clement had no time for rehearsal and had to sight read throughout the performance.



Franz Clement

While the story of how Clement sight-read and without the benefit of rehearsal is testimony to his exceptional musicianship and self-confidence, it is probable this is just a good story and Clement had some previous acquaintance with the violin part. (Clement, after all, had written his own violin concerto, also in D major, and it is said that Beethoven modelled some his after Clement's.

Another good story, which is supposed to have some truth is that after the first movement of the violin concerto Clement must have supposed his listeners needed some comic relief. He played his own Fantasia on one string with the violin turned upside down. Then in the second part of the programme he continued with the last two movements of the concerto. Another version is while did perform such a stunt, it was at the end of the concerto.

And then there is the polylingual pun which Beethoven inserted in the score: "Concerto par Clemenza pour Clement" (Concerto with clemency for Clement). Although written in cooperation with Clement, he asked Clement, aptly enough, for clemency towards his concerto.

For all that, the premiere was a flop, and Beethoven's Violin Concerto barely got another airing during the composer's lifetime. If it wasn't for the Hungarian virtuoso Joseph Joachim, we may never have heard it again. At the age of twelve he revived it at a concert in 1844, with Felix Mendelssohn conducting, no less. The piece has since become a true classic of the repertoire.



Joseph Joachim

Acclaimed German violinist **Anne-Sophie Mutter** had a similarly shaky start with the concerto. She started learning it when she was around 14, at the suggestion of her mentor, Herbert von Karajan. She had her reservations though, and she was right: when she first played it for him, he simply nodded and said "come back next year". So she did. And they both studied the piece together from the conductor's viewpoint. Subsequently, they worked together until his death.



Mutter made her debut at the Salzburg Festival with the English Chamber Orchestra under Daniel Barenboim and at 15 made her first recording of Mozart's Third and Fifth Violin Concertos, with von Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic. She made her Carnegie Hall debut in 1998, accompanied by pianist Lambert Orkis, performing a program of Franck, Tartini, Beethoven, and Ravel.

Over her life a number of pieces have been specially written for or dedicated to her by celebrated contemporary composers. While Mutter believes Schubert's Fantasia in C major to be the greatest piece ever written for violin and piano, it is Beethoven's Violin Concerto she has championed since her earliest days, and it's her recording we look at in this session.

And so to the works themselves.....

## George Gershwin – Concerto in F for Piano and Orchestra

### “Gershwin Plays with Orchestra; Some Sins of Jazz Forgiven”

So ran a headline advertising a performance of Gershwin’s work with the composer as soloist at the World’s Fair held in Chicago as part of the city’s centennial celebrations in 1933.

([csosoundsandstories.org/125moments](http://csosoundsandstories.org/125moments)).



George Gershwin

The Concerto in F Major is often called Gershwin’s “most classical” composition, though opera enthusiasts point out that his opera *Porgy and Bess* is huge in scope and draws directly upon Wagner and Puccini. But the concerto, hews closely to traditional concerto form. In this sense it is far more “classical” than, say, the popular *Rhapsody in Blue*. Gershwin scored the concerto himself (unlike the *Rhapsody*) and was piano soloist at the premiere.

The musical building blocks of the Concerto in F Major are American jazz and dance, synthesized in classical forms. It probably remains the most successful and frequently programmed such work in the American canon. Its “jazziness” is unmistakable from the opening moments, with explosive timpani strikes. The extended orchestral introduction that builds to a dramatic solo piano entrance is traditional in form, but with jazz flair. Blues, of course, were never far from Gershwin’s pen, and in the second movement we hear the flatted thirds of the blues in “blue notes” that glitter elegantly, rather than wailing as they do in the *Rhapsody in Blue*. In the final movement, Gershwin invokes the spirit of Ragtime, where his song-writing success began.

(Source: Michael Clive – [utahsymphony.org](http://utahsymphony.org))

Originally entitled *New York Concerto*, Gershwin eventually changed the title to the more generic *Concerto in F for piano and orchestra*, reflecting his conscious desire to write absolute music, as opposed to the program music he had previously written. The piece is structured as a traditional concerto in three movements: I. Allegro II. Adagio III. Allegro agitato.

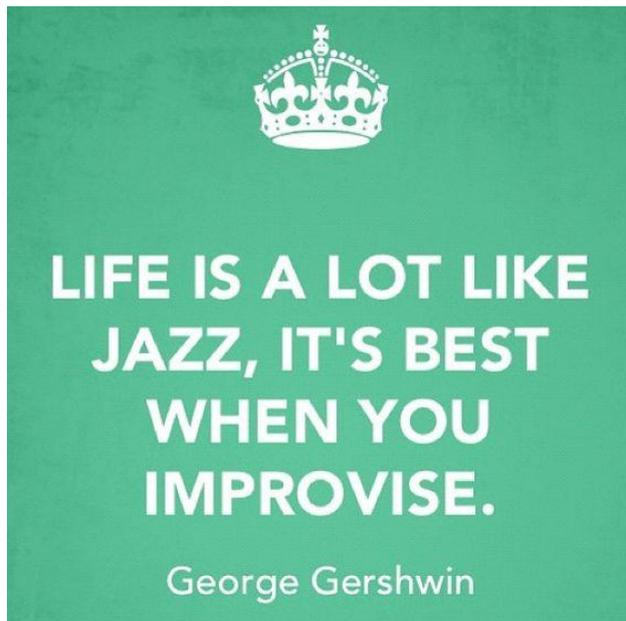
Gershwin created his own American musical style with his *Concerto*, mixing jazz, Broadway songs, dance rhythms and late romantic harmonies. The syncopated Charleston rhythm is present in the first movement, from which the solo piano emerges with the first theme. These two ideas are connected in the second movement in the piano solo-cadenza. This movement is often described as a “Blues-Nocturne” because of its stylistic features. The third movement is heavily influenced by jazz, with Gershwin describing it as an “orgy of rhythms, starting violently and keeping to the same pace throughout.”

(Source: [en.schott-music.com](http://en.schott-music.com))



*In a little more detail.....*

*After a percussive opening gesture, the concerto begins with the unmistakable long-short rhythms of the Charleston, which Gershwin meant to evoke “the young, enthusiastic spirit of American life”:*



*The pianist then enters with a more introspective, lyrical theme. These two main ideas are developed throughout a first movement marked by a wide variety of characters and sudden, mercurial changes of mood and tempo. The pianist's initial theme makes a grand, soaring return in the strings near the end.*

*The second movement approaches the intimate world of chamber music, featuring solos for trumpet, oboe, flute, and violin in addition to those for the solo piano. Described by Gershwin as “almost Mozartian in its simplicity” and possessed of “a poetic, nocturnal tone,” the main theme takes the form of a bluesy solo for muted*

*trumpet accompanied by a trio of clarinets. This main theme alternates with two contrasting episodes: the first is a faster, more playful one that begins when the piano enters; the second introduces a singing “big tune” in the strings.*

*For the finale, Gershwin created what he called “an orgy of rhythms,” a showcase for the pianist's virtuoso technique. The driving repeated notes of the main, toccata-like theme alternate with reminiscences of themes from the first and second movements (here and here), culminating in a grand return of the lyrical theme that the soloist first played at the beginning of the concerto.*

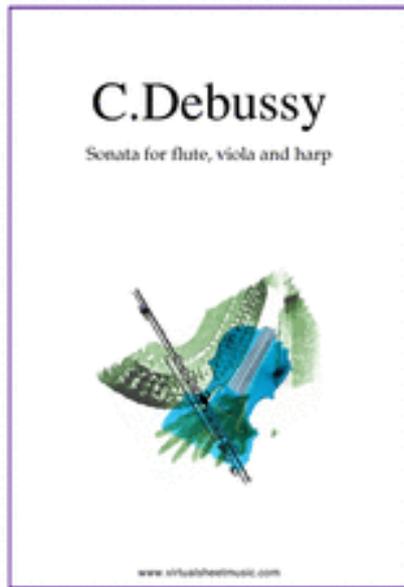
*(Source: Calvin Dotsey, houstonsymphony.org)*

*The YouTube link to the recording of Alexander Malofeev with the Russian National Orchestra conducted by Mikail Pletnev is:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7FgHbBwuSs&t=315s>



## Claude Debussy – Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp



Claude Debussy's Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp dates from the last years of Debussy's life. It was written in 1915 as part of a planned set of six sonatas for various instrumental combinations; Debussy's final illness and death in 1918 prevented the completion of the project.

Although Debussy used the familiar term "sonata" to describe the present work, there is very little that is traditional about either its combination of instruments or the formal structure of the work itself.

The first movement is not in sonata form, but features six themes whose repetitions are freely varied as the movement proceeds.

Similarly, the second movement, marked *Tempo di menuetto*, is a minuet in tempo only, its vaguely dance-like character manipulating material heard in the earlier movement.

The finale is, again, essentially freely structured though highly energetic, beginning with a persistent, motoric 16th-note figure passed between the harp and viola. An explicit restatement of material from the opening movement forms a brief respite from the action, before a return of the up-tempo music brings the sonata to its close. (Jonathan Blumhofer.com).

### **In a little more detail.....**

(Provided by Timothy Judd for "The Listeners' Club" in a review of the recording we will hear – taken from the live performance at Berlin's newly-opened Pierre Boulez Saal featuring flutist Emmanuel Pahud, violist Yulia Deyneka, and harpist Aline Khouri).



"The first movement (*Pastorale: Lento, dolce rubato*) develops out of a series of five ethereal motivic fragments which return at the end of the movement in a different order. Listen to the way these three instrumental voices, each with its own distinct persona, come alive in a vibrant musical conversation. In the opening bars, each voice magically emerges from another, beginning with the harp, moving through the flute line, and passing off to the viola. The final moments drift off into hazy, pan diatonic hues.

The second movement's title (*Interlude: Tempo di minuetto*) recalls the elegant minuet dance form from the French Baroque period. Interestingly, similar ghosts from the distant past emerge in Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, written at the same time. At two amazing points in this movement, the normal soundscape fades away and we find ourselves, suddenly, in a bright, shimmering world of new colours (the flute combines with the viola's harmonics) and Eastern harmony.

The final movement (*Finale: Allegro moderato ma risoluto*) brings the Sonata to a dramatic and exhilarating conclusion with raspy, close-to-the-bridge *sul ponticello* and snapping *pizzicato* in the viola and fiery arpeggios in the flute. In the final moments, there is a joyfully exuberant reprise of the falling four-note motive from the first movement, followed by a teasing final resolution”.



Timothy Judd concludes his review.....

“Each time you encounter this piece it offers more, so I encourage you to listen more than once”.

The link to the recording on YouTube is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rLvShcrp1c4>

# Beethoven

## Violin Concerto

*In D* *Op. 61*

Ludwig van Beethoven’s only violin concerto is truly iconoclastic, and it shattered conventional notions of what an early Romantic concerto could be. Instead of using the concerto as a vehicle to show off the soloist’s technique, Beethoven recreated the genre, giving the soloist plenty of opportunities to display their talents with music full of depth and innovation.

Beethoven composed the Violin Concerto during a highly productive period that stretched from 1804 to 1806. During this time, Beethoven wrote some of his best-known music, including the Fourth Piano Concerto, the “Razumovsky” string quartets, the Fourth and Fifth symphonies, and the “Appassionata” Piano Sonata.

Franz Clement, the 21-year-old music director and concertmaster of the Theatre an der Wien, commissioned the Violin Concerto. After the premiere, Clement made suggestions for revisions to the solo part, and Beethoven’s manuscript shows a number of corresponding alterations. Contrary to convention, Beethoven did not write a cadenza – the extended unaccompanied solo passage usually found at the end of the first movement – where the soloist demonstrates his/her technical and artistic skill. Presumably Clement improvised a cadenza at the premiere; since then, many violinists and composers have composed their own. Today’s audiences are probably most familiar with the cadenza created by violinist Fritz Kreisler.



Portrait of Beethoven in 1804  
by Willibrord Joseph Mähler

Any piece of music can be spoiled by a poor performance. According to published accounts, Beethoven finished the concerto just two days before the premiere, which meant Clement had to sight-read the opening performance. Although it was beautiful – and staggeringly difficult to play – the lack of adequate rehearsal, among other factors, gave the Violin Concerto a bad reputation that took 30 years to overcome.

In 1844, 12-year-old violin virtuoso Joseph Joachim played the concerto at his debut with the London Philharmonic. Joachim pored over the score, memorized the entire piece, and composed his own cadenzas in preparation. The hard work paid off, as one reviewer noted, “[Joachim] is perhaps the first violin player, not only of his age, but of his siècle [century].”

He performed Beethoven’s solitary concerto, which we have heard all the great performers of the last twenty years attempt, and invariably fail in . . . its performance was an eloquent vindication of the master-spirit who imagined it.”

Unlike Beethoven’s concertos for piano, which feature thick, dense chords and difficult scalar passages, the violin solo is graceful and lyrical. This warm expressiveness matched Clement’s style of playing, which Beethoven said exemplified “an extremely delightful tenderness and purity.”

The concerto begins with five repeating notes in the timpani, an unconventional opening for any piece of music written in 1806. This simple knocking is repeated, like a gentle but persistent heartbeat, throughout the movement, and becomes a recurring motif. In another distinctive break from tradition, the soloist does not enter for a full three minutes, and then begins ‘a cappella’ (alone), before reiterating the first theme in a high register.

The Larghetto’s main melody is stately, intimate, and tranquil, and becomes an orchestral backdrop over which the solo violin traces graceful arabesques in ethereally high registers. The soloist takes centre stage in this movement, playing extended cadenzas and other passages with minimal accompaniment.

The final Rondo: Allegro flows seamlessly from the Larghetto; the soloist launches immediately into a rocking melody that suggests a boat bobbing at anchor. Typical rondo format features a primary theme (A), which is interspersed with contrasting sections (B, C, D, etc.). Each of these contrasting sections departs from the (A) theme, sometimes in mood, sometimes by shifting from major to minor, or by changing keys entirely.

(Elizabeth Schwartz – Programme Notes for an Oregon Symphony Orchestra concert 2017).

The YouTube link to Anne-Sophie Mutter’s recording with Seiji Ozawa conducting the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra (at the Herbert von Karajan Memorial Concert in 2011) is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQVs4MhX3xo&t=2401s>

