



UNIVERSITY OF  
THE THIRD AGE

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*Aaron Copland*



*Marin Alsop*



*Joan Powell*

*Programme*

*Notes*

*23rd April,*

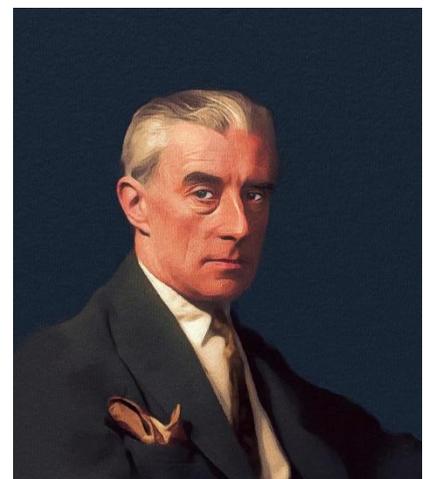
*2021*



*Dmitri Shostakovich*



*Edvard Grieg*



*Maurice Ravel*

## Today's Selections and Musicians

### Aaron Copland - Fanfare for the Common Man



Eugene Goossens

*Fanfare for the Common Man* by the American composer Aaron Copland was written in 1942 for the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra under conductor Eugene Goossens. Goossens had written to Copland about an idea he wanted to put into action for the 1942–43 concert season. During World War I he had asked British composers for a fanfare to begin each orchestral concert. It had been so successful that he thought to repeat the procedure in World War II with American composers.

A total of 18 fanfares were written at Goossens' behest, but Copland's is the only one which remains in the standard repertoire.

The fanfare was inspired in part by a speech made earlier that year by then American Vice President Henry A. Wallace in response to the US entry into World War II in which Wallace proclaimed the dawning of the "Century of the Common Man". Wallace proclaimed, "I say that the century on which we are entering, the century which will come out of this war, can be and must be the century of the common man". Copland would later echo that sentiment himself, saying, "It was the common man, after all, who was doing all the dirty work in the war and the army. He deserved a fanfare".

"Fanfare for the Common Man" was premiered on March 12, 1943, in observance of income tax time — something every "common man" has to endure. Since then, it has been performed for presidents, played to honour victims at the opening of the National September 11 Memorial & Museum, and lent a sense of gravity to television sports and news programs in the Americas, the BBC, Saudi Arabia and Australia. It's even been heard in space: In 2008, NASA pilot Eric Boe chose it as wake-up music for his crew of astronauts on the space shuttle Endeavor.

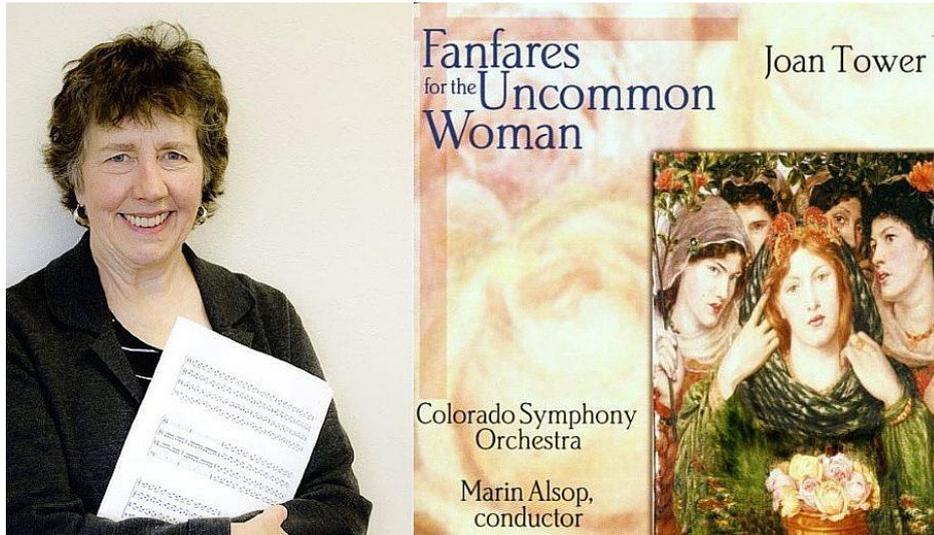
In Australia, SBS One, as far back as the early 1980s when television was an evening only occurrence, would play the fanfare as their transmission began. Later Channel Seven would use it to introduce their sporting programmes.

Copland later used the fanfare as the main theme of the fourth movement of his *Third Symphony*.

We hear it played by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by James Levine.



## Joan Tower - Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman



"Fanfare for the Common Man" has also been an inspiration to other composers, including Joan Tower, who started writing what became a series of fanfares in 1986 to honour women in the classical music world.

The composer intended it as a feminist retort to Aaron Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man".

"I'm a great admirer of Copland, and he influenced me in many ways," said Tower, the first woman to win the prestigious Grawemeyer Award\* for Music. "So it was a tribute to him, but at the same time, the title of his [fanfare] bothered me, so I turned it around. It's dedicated to women who are adventurous, take risks and are visionaries in some sense." There six fanfares in all (so far), each one dedicated to an "uncommon woman", meaning a woman who's adventurous and takes risks".

\* H. Charles Grawemeyer was an industrialist, entrepreneur, investor and philanthropist who created the Grawemeyer Awards at the University of Louisville in 1984 to inspire, honour and nurture achievements in music composition, education, religion, psychology and ideas improving world order. The First Prize for Music Composition is said to be \$100,000

The first fanfare, dating from 1987, is dedicated to conductor Marin Alsop; The second, composed in 1989 and revised in 1977, to Joan Briccetti, former general manager of the St. Louis Symphony; the third (1991) to Frances Richard, then-director of the Symphony and Concert Department at The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP); the fourth (1992) to conductor JoAnn Falletta; the fifth was written for the opening of the Joan and Irving Harris Concert Hall in Aspen, Colorado in 1993. (Joan Harris is the current chair of the Aspen Music Festival's board of trustees); and the sixth is dedicated to composer Tania Leon and premiered in 2016.



Joan Briccetti



Frances Richard



JoAnn Falletta



Joan Harris



Tania Leon

Sometimes viewed as a sort of feminist counterpoint to Aaron Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man," Tower's "Fanfares" are inspired by and pay tribute to the elder composer while making their own vibrant musical statements. The premiere of the first fanfare saw it (and presumably the other five in due course) immediately embraced as an "historic feminist statement in music."

The "Fanfares" were added to the National Recording Registry in 2014, having met the Library of Congress' criterion of being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically important."



Joan Tower is widely regarded as one of the most important American composers living today. During a career spanning more than sixty years, she has made lasting contributions to musical life in the United States as composer, performer, conductor, and educator. Her works have been commissioned by major ensembles, soloists, and orchestras.

Musical America chose her to be its 2020 Composer of the Year; in 2019 the League of American Orchestras awarded her its highest honour, the Gold Baton. Tower is the first composer chosen for a Ford Made in America consortium commission of sixty-five orchestras.

\* "Ford made in America" is an entrepreneurial group of smaller-budget orchestra leaders who with financial assistance from the Ford Motor Company pool their own financial resources to commission works by renowned American composers. In this way a national network has been created through which each participating orchestra has access to resources that would never be available to an orchestra of its size on its own. Joan Tower is the first composer to be selected for the programme .

Joan Tower has been described as one of the most successful female composers of her time, with her Fanfares for the Uncommon Woman being one of her most famous and well-loved works. We will hear the first fanfare played by the Brass & Percussion Sections of the São Paulo State Symphony at a 2012 BBC Proms concert. The conductor is the recipient of its dedication – Marin Alsop. The American conductor is artistic director of the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, becoming the first woman to take up the prestigious role. She is also the first woman to conduct the Last Night of the Proms.



### Dmitri Shostakovich – Symphony No.9



Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony was written in a fateful year: 1945. It also subverted the expectations of the Russian musical world. In the spring of 1945, as the Soviet army pushed into Germany, Shostakovich told the press at home that he was working on "a symphony of victory with a song of praise."

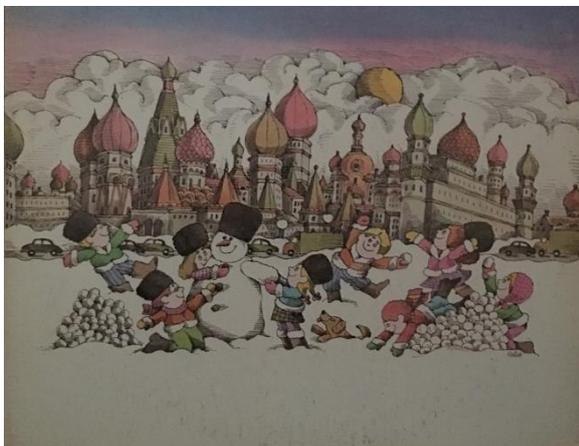
After the Seventh and Eighth, everyone was awaiting the triumphal Victory Symphony. Indeed, the double significance of the U.S.S.R.'s victory in World War II with the idea of celebrating the Russian people and the Red Army's liberation of their homeland and the numerical symbolism of a Ninth Symphony (which invited comparisons with a certain German composer's utopian Ninth Symphony) put pressure on Shostakovich to compose a grandiose piece that would glorify Stalin's regime.

Having been terrorized by that regime, Shostakovich was not particularly willing to comply; open defiance, however, was impossible, and in the months leading up to the summer Shostakovich led everyone on by dropping broad hints that it would be a choral symphony, but that he did not wish to invite comparison with any other choral ninth symphony.

The symphony he actually wrote could not have been more different. This was a tactic Shostakovich would use time and time again—promising to compose the piece the regime wanted while actually giving it something else. (In 1938 he had teased the public, and the regime, in this way when he told a magazine that he was writing a symphony about Lenin, but no such work materialized). There were other politically orthodox pronouncements attributed to him about how it was time to compose works closely linked with popular struggle.



Shostakovich's Seventh and Eighth Symphonies had been monumental works, and the USSR expected the Ninth to be an even bigger monument. What Shostakovich finished in August 1945 was thus a surprise to everyone, a disappointment for many, and a puzzle for others. It was short; there are single movements in the Fourth, Seventh, and Eighth Symphonies that are longer than the entire Ninth. It was small in scale and full of humour instead of heroism. Shostakovich said, "Musicians will love to play it and critics will delight in blasting it." He didn't know the half of it.



For about two years, Soviet critics were divided about the Ninth, some calling it a delightful, if lightweight, work, and others suggesting that it amounted to an unwarranted artistic vacation in momentous times when momentous works were called for. Shostakovich had obviously set himself up for such criticism by promising something momentous in the first place.

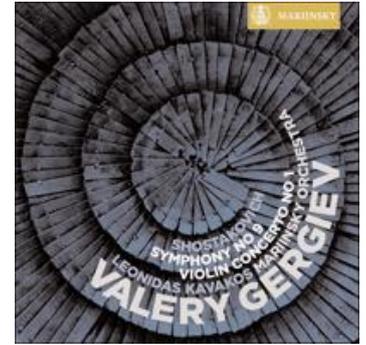
Perhaps, after finding himself at the centre of a government crackdown on elitist and modernist musical trends in 1936, he saw such pronouncements as a cheap and easy way of publicly asserting his patriotism and political orthodoxy. But it did him more harm than good when the official axe fell again.

In 1948 the Soviet government, which had relaxed its oversight of the arts during the war years, cracked down again on "formalism," which it defined as an elitist "catering to the purely individualistic experiences of a small clique of aesthetes" while rejecting "the classical heritage," "national character," "service to the people," "truthfulness and realism," and "deep organic connection with the people and their legacy of music and folk song."

As in 1936, Shostakovich's prominence made him a necessary target, and many of his works were banned. Though Stalin himself lifted the ban before long, Shostakovich did not come out with another symphony until after Stalin's death in 1953.

No one will ever know if he could have shielded himself in 1948 by producing the promised victory symphony in 1945, but it is likely he could have at least cushioned his fall had his latest symphony been a triumph.

For our appreciation the recording is by the Mariinsky Orchestra of St Petersburg conducted by Valery Gergiev.



### Maurice Ravel - Pavane Pour Une Infante Défunte

The Pavane Pour Une Infante Défunte was written as a piano piece for Princesse Edmond de Polignac, whose father was Isaac Singer, the famous sewing machine manufacturer. The strikingly morose title of the work belies its actual inspiration. Ravel stated that "When I put together the words that make up this title, my only thought was the pleasure of alliteration". While it's literally true that the French should be translated as 'Pavane for a dead Princess', the English translation of the title is rather unfortunate.



Far from being about death, Ravel was at pains to point out that, despite the title, the piece is not a funeral lament but 'rather an evocation of the pavane that might have been danced by such a little princess as painted by Velazquez.'

His comments went largely unheard, though; even today, many believe the piece to have a quite different meaning from the one the composer intended.



The original piano version of the Pavane was composed in 1899. Ravel, however, was a master of orchestration, as is borne out by his ever popular arrangement of Mussorgsky's famous set of piano pieces, Pictures at an Exhibition. As he went on to prove with his Pavane Pour Une Infante Défunte, the French composer was also a dab hand at reworking his own solo piano works for full orchestra although his orchestral arrangement for the Pavane wasn't premiered for another eleven years.



La Pavane, by Gustave Jean Jacquet

The pavane was a stately dance of the 16th-century European aristocracy, often used as an opportunity to display elegant dress and to open ceremonial balls. It's presumed to have travelled from Italy to France and England by way of Spain; in southern Spain it was performed in churches on solemn occasions. (The name may come from the Spanish pavo or Italian pavone, for peacock, whose slow, prideful walk mimics the dance).

The original intent of the musical style was supposed to represent a Pavane, which was a dance during the middle ages and Renaissance period. The hope was to capture the vision of a princess as she enters a ballroom and proceeds to dance.

The beautiful elegance and impressionistic colour of the rhythms and the chords help to create this dream/fantasy state, though its slowness captured an emotion that Ravel had not intended. Many of the conductors mistook Ravel's slow tempo, and the name of the piece itself, to be a signal for an over-the-top emotional piece. Conductors, musicians, and audiences quickly latched onto this idea and transformed Ravel's beautiful dream into a gorgeous song of mourning.

While this piece takes well to this interpretation, Ravel himself ended up hating his own piece, complaining that it sounded more like a "dead Pavane" (or dead dance) than a nostalgic reminder of the magic of the old days.

We hear it played by the National orchestra of France conducted by Dalia Stasevska – who hails from Finland and is currently Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

## Edvard Grieg – String Quartet No.1



After busy years in Oslo, teaching and conducting to make a living, Edvard Grieg and his wife Nina left for Hardanger in 1877. In the course of a couple of years there he wrote several masterworks, among them the String Quartet No 1 in G minor.

On hearing Grieg's quartet, Franz Liszt declared: 'It is a long time since I have encountered a new composition, especially a string quartet, which has intrigued me as greatly as this distinctive and admirable work by Grieg.' The musical language is rather radical, and in many ways Grieg's quartet is a bridge between the late Beethoven quartets and Debussy's quartet, composed fifteen years after Grieg's.

Working hard to find a thematic and formal framework, Grieg decided to build the whole quartet on the melody of his Ibsen song Spillemaend ('Minstrel', Op 25 No 1), which underlies all four movements. Grieg said of his work: "It aims at breadth, to soar, and above all at a vigorous sound for the instruments for which it is written". ([hyperion-records.co.uk](http://hyperion-records.co.uk)).

Like Sibelius, Grieg tried the string quartet several times, but left only one mature, completed essay in the form. He began writing the Quartet in G minor in the summer of 1877, and worked on it through the winter in a composing retreat in Lofthus, in the Hardanger district of Norway.

"I have recently finished a string quartet which I still haven't heard," the composer wrote to a friend in the summer of 1878. "It is in G minor and not planned to be meat for small minds! It aims at breadth, vigour, flight of imagination, and, above all, fullness of tone for the instruments for which it is written."

Confusingly, Grieg's "String Quartet No. 1" is the second of three that he wrote, and the only completed quartet of his that is still in existence. The one before it was completed in the early 1860s and is now lost. The third he had tried to write, and what is now in some places described as no. 2, was partially written and left aside, the composer feeling unable to complete piece after some time. At his death, only the first two movements and fragments of the third and fourth quartets remained.

The recording we listen to is by the Nordic String Quartet - formed in 2013 at The Royal Danish Academy of Music. The Quartet consists of four passionate string players who love chamber music.



Already an established chamber music ensemble on the Scandinavian music scene, the group is frequently invited to festivals and chamber music societies. The quartet has received "Odd Fellow Logernes Musikpris in 2014", the Léonie Sonnings Talentpris 2017, and Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie Carl-Nielsens Legats Talentpris 2018.

**And so to the Music.....**

### **Aaron Copland - Fanfare for the Common Man**



"Fanfare for the Common Man" begins with dramatic percussion, heralding something big and exciting. Then comes a ladder of simple trumpet notes, solemn and heroic. The entire work is built around this original statement, which grows in intensity through exchanges of the theme between trombones and tuba, and then horns and trumpets.

The score concludes with a magnificently effective percussion crescendo supporting a thrilling final sustained chord for the brass. The whole piece takes less than four minutes to play, but its admirers say it speaks volumes in that time.

"It's a piece that feels like it was written by God," says jazz trumpeter and composer Terence Blanchard. "Whenever I hear it, it stops me in my tracks and makes me reflect on the goodness of man. And I know that sounds corny for some, but it really makes me think about [how], at the end of the day, most people in this country are good, God-fearing people. Honestly, that could have been our national anthem".

## Joan Tower – Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman

Identical in instrumentation to and containing musical quotes from Copland's "Fanfare," and written in 1986, "Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman No. 1, features the full complement of brass (three trumpets, four French horns, three trombones, tuba) and percussion required by Copland with the addition of marimba, chimes, glockenspiel and drums.



The fanfare starts with the same percussive strikes as Copland's, but the first brass themes heard are much more embellished and fast-paced. The work is additive, which means instruments are layered in, which makes this work very polyphonic (differently to Copland, whose work is homophonic).

The start is bold and strong, which represents Tower's first 'brave woman'. The flourish of sound that happens at the beginning of the fanfare is exciting and perfectly sets the scene. The lower brass then play a new motif, which is shadowed by the tuba. The horns then play a vibrant theme which is free and reflects Tower's unafraid musical voice. The initial themes are repeated and the work builds to a climax. The extensive use of percussion is also a highlight as it brings this vibrant work to life. The snare drum and timpani at the end bring the drive at the end of the piece.

## Dmitri Shostakovich -- Symphony No.9 in E flat major Opus 70



Shostakovich and Mravinsky

Shostakovich's Ninth is totally devoid of pompous grandeur; in its place is a compact, transparent, classically-oriented work. Russian conductor Yevgeny Mravinsky, who would give the premiere of the symphony, wrote that it "scoffs at complacency, pompousness, the 'desire to rest on one's laurels', and sing one's own praises," but also noted that "the symphony is not entirely ironical.

It also has genuine lyricism and profound sorrow."

Paramount is Shostakovich's sense of humour : irreverent, absurdist and sardonic.

The Ninth is sometimes called Shostakovich's classical symphony because of its brevity, form, and frequent chamber character. The classicism is most apparent in the first movement, which follows 18th-century sonata form right down to repeating the exposition (the only Shostakovich Symphony that does). The movement is a spirited, sassy gallop with touches of slapstick, most memorably the trombone's repeated mini-fanfare that both heralds and interrupts the piccolo's statement of the second theme.

The second movement's mood is darker – melancholy, bittersweet, or tragic, depending on the conductor's attitude – but still more rooted in dance than in song. The theme that the clarinet introduces could be a slow waltz, but its three-beat pulse is interrupted at odd intervals with a one-beat hesitation.

The final three movements are played without pause. The Scherzo begins fleeting and mercurial, becomes downright demonic as the brass assert themselves, and then, instead of building to a furious climax, loses momentum and starts to die away. It is blasted aside by a Mussorgskian Largo that consists of two menacing pronouncements from the trombones and tuba, each of which is followed by a soulful bassoon solo. The second solo turns into the jaunty principal theme of the Finale, which sometimes has the feel of a dance and sometimes of a march.

Surprisingly, the symphony was initially well-received by Soviet critics. It was not until the Soviet regime issued the infamously repressive decree the following year that it was condemned. One critic wrote, “What was Shostakovich counting on when, instead of creating in the Ninth Symphony in the image of the victorious man, he created one of a carefree Yankee recklessly whistling a cheerful little tune?” Shostakovich managed to weather this storm, but he would not compose another symphony until Stalin was safely dead.



## Maurice Ravel – Pavane Pour Une Infante Défunte



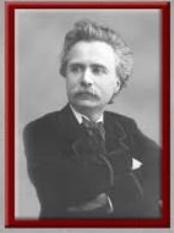
Maurice Ravel was born in the French Pyrenees, only a few miles from the Spanish border, a geographical boundary he often crossed in his music. Like an earlier composition (a Habanera for two pianos), the Pavane Pour Une Infante Défunte was conceived as piano music and benefited greatly from the translation to a full orchestral score. The piano piece was an instant success. Ravel later realized that music of such apparent ease—a simple melody over broken chords—is doomed to a life at the hands of amateur pianists, and so eleven years later he rescued the Pavane and rescored it for the modern virtuoso orchestra.

In spite of its brevity, the work is noticeably sectional; it basically unfolds in an ABACA scheme, that is, A = the original melody, with both the B and C sections containing two parallel but differing statements of the same theme ; the B section is gently plaintive and the C section quite bright, even exuberant, by comparison.

The Pavane rides along upon a steady eighth note pulse, in keeping with the pavane's origins as a stately Renaissance dance, and is filled with stylized rhythmic gestures. The final iteration of the opening melody is much fuller than the previous two, and here Ravel allows himself to make a dramatic move from pianissimo to fortissimo over the course of the last few bars.

## Edvard Grieg - Quartet No 1 in G minor Opus 27

Edvard Grieg  
String Quartet  
No. 1 In G Minor  
Opus 27



An astonishingly rich sonority is indeed an obvious characteristic of this piece. All four parts have an extraordinary amount of double-stopping, creating a full-bodied sound that is orchestral but also often folkloric, like the Hardanger fiddle music that Grieg knew and loved so well.

The main theme of the work, however, comes from Grieg's own song "Spillemaend" (Minstrels, or Fiddlers).

The poem that Grieg set in 1876 as the first of six Ibsen songs (Op. 25) is about the Hulder, a water spirit who offers minstrels great musical gifts in exchange for their happiness, and the choice of this song here suggests an allusive and elusive personal program. The theme from the song is boldly stated at the outset and recurs often throughout the first movement. Motives from it appear in the middle movements, and the motto theme returns again in the leaping finale.

From a purely musical standpoint this "first" quartet is moving and powerful and beautiful, emotionally significant, with plenty of colour and contrast. The work is in four movements and occupies about 35 minutes.



Artistic depiction of a Hulder. They are often described as gracious feminine beings with a long cow-like tail. They can lose their beautiful physical appearance if they are convinced to marry a mortal in a church. They recurrently appear in Norwegian and Swedish folktales. In the Swedish folktales they are sometimes referred to as Skogsrå (the living spirit of the forests).

**1. Un poco andante - Allegro molto ed agitato** - The work begins with all 4 instruments in unison, one of the devices Grieg uses to impart his own unique sound to the quartet. The original song that the main theme was taken from dealt with a water spirit that would give minstrels great gifts of musical abilities in exchange for their happiness. The main theme is full of rhythmic verve and appears in all 4 movements.

The theme is full of drama and plays itself out until it comes to a full close. After a slight pause the second theme begins, a lyric tune that has outbursts that remind the listener of the opening. The opening theme returns and alternates with the second theme in a section that can be thought of as the development. The recapitulation brings the back the drama of the opening, along with the full close and slight pause before the second theme commences. There is an extended coda that continues to deal with the two themes and parts of them, including a short section where the cello plays solo while the other three instruments play tremolo and close to the bridge\* (sul ponticello) which gives the accompaniment a glassy, shimmering effect, until the instruments join in a loud, dramatic ending to the movement.

\* The nearer the bridge the string is bowed the greater the volume. The timbre becomes

*brighter but at the same time glassy, shrill, eerie, pale and thin.*

**II. Romanze. Andantino** – The movement begins with a happy, waltz-like theme, after which a more sinister and nervous middle section that is related to the main theme is played. After a transition, the waltz returns with a few differences. The nervous theme interrupts the waltz a few times until the waltz music ends the movement in the high register of all 4 instruments.

**III. Intermezzo. Allegro molto marcato** – *Più vivo e scherzando* –

The song theme that opens the work returns at the start of this movement. The music remains rough around the edges as it rhythmically makes its way to the middle section where Grieg flexes his contrapuntal skill as the cello begins a theme by itself, and each instrument enters in turn while the others play pizzicato.



This section is repeated and then developed. The first theme returns, a few references are made to the middle section, and the movement scurries to an end.

**IV. Finale. Lento** – *Presto al saltarello* – The solemnness of the opening of the quartet returns as an introduction before the music turns into a saltarello (a courtly Italian dance) full of cross rhythms, syncopation and frenzy. Near the end the music turns back to the main theme of the work and alternates between major and minor mode versions until at the very end the major mode wins out and the work ends in G major.

### **Acknowledgment of Sources**

#### **Aaron Copland – Fanfare for the Common Man**

Wikipedia

National Public Radio New York ([npr.org](http://npr.org))

#### **Joan Tower – Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman**

Ellen Grolman – Frostburg State University in Frostburg, Maryland

Alex Burns...([classicalalexburns.com](http://classicalalexburns.com)).

[wisemusicclassical.com](http://wisemusicclassical.com)

#### **Shostakovich – Symphony No. 9**

Howard Posner for the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra ([laphil.com](http://laphil.com))

Calvin Dotsey for the Houston Symphony Orchestra ([houstonsymphony.org](http://houstonsymphony.org)).

#### **Ravel – Pavane Pour Une Infante Défunte**

[classicfm.com](http://classicfm.com)

[theodysseyonline.com](http://theodysseyonline.com)

[allmusic.com](http://allmusic.com)

#### **Grieg – String Quartet No 1**

Musical Musings (<https://muswrite.blogspot.com>)

## YouTube Links to Recordings

*Aaron Copland - Fanfare for the Common Man*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLMVB0B1\\_Ts](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLMVB0B1_Ts)

*Joan Tower - Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CcO\\_QookAU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CcO_QookAU)

*Shostakovich - Symphony No.9*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16MIEhgoHNI>

*Ravel - Pavane Pour Une Infante Défunte*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2\\_c8JRCKq1A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_c8JRCKq1A)

*Grieg - String Quartet No 1*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxlP764lgOk&t=485s>