



LONGWOOD
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA



2021/22 SEASON

[LONGWOODSYMPHONY.ORG](https://www.longwoodsyrphony.org)



2021-22 Season

Healing the Community Through Music

OCTOBER 9

American Strings

Saturday, Oct. 9, 2021 at 8:00 PM

BARBER Serenade, Op. 1

CARTER Elegy for string orchestra

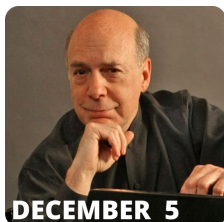
FOOTE Suite, Op. 63

HIGDON String from Concerto for Orchestra

GRANT STILL Danzas de Panama

TORKE December

ZAIMONT Elegy



All Beethoven

Sunday, Dec. 5, 2021 at 3:00 PM

BEETHOVEN Piano Concerto No. 3

Victor Rosenbaum, piano

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 2

Violence Transformed
Celebrating The Transformative Power Of Art

Benefiting Violence Transformed



Haydn & Respighi

Saturday, Mar. 5, 2022 at 8:00 PM

BRITTEN Soirées musicales

RESPIGHI Ancient Airs and Dances, Suite No. 1

MOZART Sinfonia Concertante

HAYDN Symphony No. 96, "Miracle"

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empowering women**
ywca
cambridge, ma

Benefiting YWCA Cambridge

MAY 14

Mozart & Ives

Saturday, May 14, 2022 at 8:00 PM

MOZART Symphony No. 31, "Paris"

IVES Symphony No. 3, "The Camp Meeting"

MOZART Violin Concerto No. 5

Rachell Ellen Wong, violin

THRIVEGULU
from SURVIVOR to THRIVER

Benefiting THRIVEGulu



All Concerts Take Place At:

New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall
30 Gainsborough St, Boston MA 02115

LONGWOOD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
longwoodsymphony.org

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LONGWOOD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

320 Washington St, Ste 200
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Dear Friends of the LSO,

It has been nearly 19 months since the orchestra last performed at New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall. To be back is like coming home. The musicians of Longwood Symphony have long awaited the chance to make music for a live audience once again, and we are so glad you can experience this reunion with all of us.

Longwood Symphony dedicates this performance to Boston's frontline healthcare workers, some of whom are represented on stage, and even more in the audience. The COVID-19 pandemic has been, and remains, a challenge, to say the least. To those of you who never stopped looking out for the health and wellness of our community – simply saying thank you doesn't fully reflect how grateful we are for your tireless efforts.

Featuring the string instruments from the Longwood Symphony, Music Director Ronald Feldman leads the reunited orchestra in a program of American composers. With works spanning from the early 1900's to the early 2000's, this concert brings together some of our country's most prolific composers. From moments of tranquility to the nostalgia of the winter season to toe-tapping inducing dances, the music elicits a wide range of emotion and musical styles.

Thank you again for joining us to support the orchestra and help honor the healthcare workers who keep our community safe. If you are one of these healthcare heroes – we hope this performance brings you joy and expresses the fullest sense of our immense gratitude.

You are all valued members of the LSO community, and without you, we couldn't do what we love most: share our passion for music, medicine, and service. We sincerely hope you enjoy the concert!



Michael Barnett, MD
Chair, Board of Directors



Bridget Brazeau
Executive Director

AUDIENCE POLICIES

Vaccination Requirement: All audience members must present proof of full vaccination against COVID-19. Documentation of vaccine status (vaccine card, photograph/photocopy of vaccine card, or photograph of vaccine card stored on an electronic device) must be presented along with a valid ID upon entry to all indoor venues. A negative COVID-19 test will not be accepted in lieu of proof of vaccination.

Face masks: All audience members are required to wear a mask at all times while in indoor venues. [Click here](#) to review the CDC's mask recommendations.

Audience Capacity & Distancing: Audiences at New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall will be permitted at a reduced capacity of 480 persons maximum, about 50% of normal capacity. Guests are required to be seated with 3' distancing between each person.

Concert Length: Indoor performances will be limited to a maximum of 90 minutes total, without intermission.

Guest Responsibility: Guests should stay home if they are sick, are experiencing any [symptoms of COVID-19](#), or have been exposed to COVID-19.

Concessions, Program, & Ticketing:

Concessions will not be available or permitted. Digital programs will be provided in lieu of printed programs. Touchless ticketing via electronic devices will be provided for all ticketed events and is the encouraged entry method for all audience members. Will Call pick up will not be available.

Access to Hall: Doors to NEC's Jordan Hall will open 45 minutes prior to each concert start time. All guests are encouraged not to arrive before this time.

Updates to Guidelines: These Health & Safety Guidelines are subject to change based on the latest guidance from local officials and the Centers for Disease Control. LSO's Health & Safety Committee will continuously monitor the situation and make any necessary changes in order to prioritize the health and safety of our audience, musicians, staff, and volunteers. Updates will be communicated via email and [our website](#). Please call 617-987-0100 or email info@longwoodsmyphony.org with specific questions.

ORCHESTRA POLICIES

- Orchestra members, guest artists, staff, and volunteers must provide proof of full vaccination against COVID-19.
- Orchestra members, guest artists, staff, and volunteers are required to wear masks at all indoor venues, with the exception of wind and brass musicians when actively playing.
- Orchestra members, guest artists, staff, and volunteers must attest to their health by filling out a questionnaire prior to entering any performance space. Anyone experiencing symptom(s) concerning for COVID-19 are not permitted to attend.
- When indoors, non-aersolizing instruments (strings, piano, percussion) must keep a distance of 3' and aersolizing instruments (winds and brass) must keep a distance of 6'. No instruments may share stands.
- When indoors, ensemble size will be restricted to 40 performers.

COVID-19 RESOURCES

- Learn more about and schedule your free COVID-19 vaccination [here](#).
- Find a COVID-19 testing location near you [here](#).
- See the latest COVID-19 updates from the City of Boston [here](#) and the state of Massachusetts [here](#).



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OCTOBER 10

Hindemith Kammermusik 5
Gershwin Rhapsody in Blue
Mendelssohn Quartet in A minor

DECEMBER 12

Gershwin Preludes for Piano
(arranged for woodwind quintet)
Hindemith Die Serenaden
Mendelssohn Quartet in F minor

FEBRUARY 27

Hindemith Quartet for clarinet,
violin, cello and piano
Gershwin Songs
(arranged for viola and piano)
Mendelssohn Piano Trio in D minor

APRIL 10

Gershwin Song Selections
Mendelssohn Quintet
in B-flat major



Longwood Symphony Orchestra

Founded in Boston in 1982, the **Longwood Symphony Orchestra** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that uniquely combines music, medicine, and public service. Named after Boston's Longwood Medical Area, the LSO is composed primarily of highly trained musicians who are also medical professionals, and its programs focus on combining the healing arts of music and medicine.

This season, the LSO proudly celebrates its 39th year of **healing the community through music**. Through performances at New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall and throughout Greater Boston, the LSO works to advance its mission, which is to perform concerts of musical diversity and excellence while supporting health-related nonprofit organizations. The LSO believes that music has the power to heal the soul and the community.

The orchestra received the 2007 MetLife Award for Excellence in Community Engagement from the League of American Orchestras and today continues to set an example for community engagement nationwide. The LSO is also the proud recipient of the 2011 Commonwealth Award from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, which is given every two years to honor the extraordinary contributions that arts and culture make to education, economic vitality, and quality of life in communities across Massachusetts.

Healing Art of Music Program

Since 1991, the LSO has used its concerts to help nonprofit "Community Partners" raise awareness and funds for important medical, wellness, and educational causes. The heart of the Healing Art of Music program is the Community Partner's use of an LSO concert as the centerpiece of a unique fundraising event. Since the program was founded, the LSO has collaborated with more than 55 nonprofit organizations, helping them raise more than \$2,800,000 for Boston's underserved populations. The publicity surrounding each concert shines a spotlight on the Community Partner, raising awareness about the organization's work among new audiences.

In the fall of 2008, the LSO launched **LSO On Call**, a community engagement initiative that brings chamber music directly to patients across Massachusetts in hospital wards, rehabilitation centers, and health-care facilities. During its first year, LSO On Call performances touched the lives of 500 patients, from Boston to Brockton to Marlborough. LSO On Call performances continue at various health-related facilities throughout the regular season.

Visit www.longwoodsymphony.org for more information.

Ronald Feldman, Music Director

Saturday, October 9, 2021, 8:00 p.m.
New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall

Arthur Foote (1853 - 1937)	Suite in E major for string orchestra, Op. 63 I. Praeludium II. Pizzicato III. Fuge
Elliott Carter (1908 - 2012)	<i>Elegy</i> for string orchestra, Op. 3
Jennifer Higdon (1962 -)	<i>String</i> from Concerto for Orchestra
Judith Lang Zaimont (1945 -)	<i>Elegy</i> for Strings from Symphony No. 2: <i>Remember Me</i>
Samuel Barber (1910 - 1981)	Serenade, Op. 1
Michael Torke (1961 -)	<i>December</i>
William Grant Still (1895 - 1978)	<i>Danzas de Panama</i> Based on Panamanian folk themes collected by Elizabeth Waldo I. Tamborito II. Mejorana y Socavon III. Punto IV. Cumbia y Congo



VIOLIN 1

Stacie Lin, *Concertmaster*

MD/PhD Student, Harvard/MIT Division of HST

Jean Bae

Wellesley College

Catherine Brewster

English Teacher, Commonwealth School

Anabelle Hangen

Musician, Realtor

Shenkiat Lim

Managing Partner & Chief People Officer,
New Profit

Psyche Loui, PhD

Associate Professor in Music and Psychology,
Northeastern University

Amanda Wang

VIOLIN 2

Shirie Leng, MD, *Principal*

Anesthesiologist (retired), BIDMC

Sumi Fasolo

Architect, Cambridge Seven Associates

Hannah Goodrick

Research Assistant, Gastroenterology, BWH;
Music Teacher, Boston School of Music Arts

Patricia Harney, PhD

Psychologist, CHA

Elizabeth Henderson

Administrator (retired), MIT

Ji Seok Kim

Adjunct Instructor in Physics, Phillips
Academy Andover

Anna Legedza, ScD

Biostatistician

Kristin Qian

PhD Student, Biological & Biomedical
Sciences, HMS

Jenny Smythe, PhD

Physicist

ABBREVIATIONS

BIDMC	Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center
BWH	Brigham & Women's Hospital
CHA	Cambridge Health Alliance
HMS	Harvard Medical School
HST	Health Sciences & Technology
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NEC	New England Conservatory

VIOLA

Jennifer Gruzca, *Principal*

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Ronald Feldman, *Music Director*

Two-time winner of the League of American Orchestras' ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music, Ronald Feldman has achieved critical acclaim for his work as a conductor and cellist. He has appeared as guest conductor with major orchestras such as the London Symphony Orchestra, the St. Louis Symphony, and the Quebec Symphony, as well as many regional orchestras, including the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra and the orchestras of Springfield (MA), Albany, and Amarillo.

After successful appearances as a guest conductor for three consecutive seasons at Symphony Hall and Tanglewood, Feldman assumed the post of Assistant Conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra. He served as assistant to Boston Pops Principal Conductor and composer John Williams from 1989 to 1993.

Feldman joined the Boston Symphony as a cellist at the age of 19 and played with the orchestra until 2001. He has appeared as a soloist with numerous orchestras, performing a wide range of concerto repertoire from Dvořák to Ligeti. His many chamber music affiliations have included performances with the Boston Symphony Chamber Players, Collage New Music, the Boston Conservatory Chamber Players, and the Williams Chamber Players. Other performances have included collaborations with violinist Gil Shaham, cellist Yo-Yo Ma, and pianists Emmanuel Ax and Garrick Ohlsson.

Feldman recorded an all-Mozart album with the George Enescu Philharmonic Orchestra of Bucharest, which received



excellent reviews in the *American Record Guide* and *Fanfare Magazine*. In his review, Steven Ritter of the *American Record Guide* asserted, "the Mozart Symphony No. 29 is given a dazzling reading, effulgent and scintillating, with articulation and note length all in sync." Feldman also conducted the London Symphony Orchestra and virtuoso trumpet player Arturo Sandoval in a recording of music by John Williams and Kevin Kaska.

In 2001, Feldman left the Boston Symphony Orchestra to pursue other musical interests. He has served as Music Director of the New England Philharmonic and the Worcester Orchestra. Feldman joined the Longwood Symphony Orchestra as Music Director in July 2012 and also serves as Music Director of the Berkshire Symphony Orchestra, a regional orchestra in residence at Williams College. In addition to serving on the faculties of the New England Conservatory of Music and the Berklee College of Music, Feldman is Artist in Residence, Lecturer in Music, and Chamber Music Coordinator at Williams College.



ARTHUR FOOTE (1853 - 1937) **Suite in E major for string** **orchestra, Opus 63**

There was no history of musical talent in Arthur Foote's family, but like so many children of his day, he and his sister were subjected to the usual "civilizing" influence of piano lessons at an early age. Young Arthur took to the instrument with sufficient enthusiasm for his parents to consult the Boston musician B. J. Lang when Arthur was fourteen. This led to his beginning studies in harmony with Stephen Emery at the New England Conservatory. He entered Harvard at the age of seventeen. There he was able to study in the only academic program in composition in the entire country under John Knowles Paine, the dean of Boston composers, the first professor of music in an American university, who quickly became the father figure for all serious composers in this country. Years later, in his autobiography, Foote recalled that experience:

He was not one of the born teachers, but certainly he could give generously. Looking back at some of the fugues, etc., of which I have preserved the manuscripts, I am surprised to find how good the result of our work was. His influence was always for what was strong and good in music.

Despite this study, however, Foote had at first no intention of becoming a professional musician; he was aiming at a career in law. But during the summer after his graduation from Harvard, as a pastime before beginning his legal studies, he went back to B. J. Lang, who had heard him play seven years earlier, for piano and organ lessons. Lang was so encouraging that Foote returned to Harvard for a postgraduate year of study with Paine; in 1875 he was awarded the first master's degree in music ever granted in the United States. He thus became the first important, professionally trained composer to receive his entire training in this country, without the then requisite

period of study in Germany. Of course, his musical education was still completely Germanic in its orientation, but that merely means that he learned as composers have always learned--by studying the music that spoke most meaningfully to them, and for Paine as well as Foote that meant Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms.

Foote spent the rest of his long life (when he died at 84, he was described as "the Nestor of Boston composers") serving Boston's musical life in various capacities: as pianist and organist, chamber music organizer and performer, composer, and teacher. Like most of his contemporaries, he found that the organ loft offered a measure of financial security, since all of the largest churches had elaborate musical programs that revolved around the organist. Foote served as a church organist for some three decades, finally retiring in 1910. Unlike most of his colleagues, he spent very little time in any academic position. For many years he had a private studio for instruction in piano and organ, and he spent a summer as acting chairman and guest lecturer at the University of California at Berkeley, but he turned down the offer of a permanent position there. It wasn't until 1921--when he was 68 years old--that he joined the faculty of the New England Conservatory, where he remained until his death. A bust of Foote by sculptress Bashka Paeff may still be seen at the entrance of Jordan Hall at the Conservatory.

During Foote's earlier years he played in many concerts, usually as the pianist in chamber music performances. He organized a regular series of concerts presenting the repertory for piano trio in the 1880s and also played frequently with Franz Kneisel (for twenty years concertmaster of the Boston Symphony) and the Kneisel Quartet. Through Kneisel "I became aware of a different and higher standard of performance through my work with him in rehearsal. All this has been a matter for deep gratitude." But playing concerts was not his real, compelling interest, and he never felt himself fitted, either by temperament or technique, to devote himself fully to it, though at

FOOTE Suite (continued)

one period he was playing seventy-five concerts a year.

During all these years of varied activities, Foote composed for most of the musical ensembles active in Boston during his day. He wrote pieces for the choral societies that were (and are) active in this city, among them settings of Longfellow's *The Farewell of Hiawatha* (for men's voices and orchestra) and *The Wreck of the Hesperus* (for mixed voices and orchestra) which were very popular at the time and would repay revival today. The bulk of Foote's output consists of chamber music, including three string quartets, two piano trios, a violin sonata, a cello sonata (also arranged in an alternative version for viola), a piano quintet, and many smaller pieces.

As an orchestral composer, Foote was somewhat atypical of the Boston group, who generally aimed at full-scale symphonies while also writing overtures, suites, and other "lighter" works (among Foote's contemporaries, Paine and Chadwick were especially successful in the genre of the symphony). Foote's lyric style, somewhat less assertive than Paine's and less exuberant than Chadwick's, lent itself rather well to the chamber music repertory. He never attempted a symphony, though he did write a still unpublished cello concerto and a number of smaller works, including an impressive "symphonic prologue" *Francesca da Rimini*, an overture *In the Mountains*, the well-known *Night Piece* for flute and strings, the colorful *Four Character Pieces after the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, and several works for string orchestra. All of these (except the cello concerto) have been performed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and all enjoyed some popularity in Foote's day (and do not deserve the oblivion into which most of them have fallen). But the Opus 63 Suite for strings, at least, retained a firm foothold in the repertory during Serge Koussevitzky's tenure as music director. It was one of his favorite American pieces; he programmed it in no fewer than

eight of his twenty-five seasons in Boston and recorded it in the early forties.

The Suite originally consisted of four movements. Foote himself decided to remove a theme-and-variations movement from the work before publication (though it still exists in manuscript at the Library of Congress).

The three movements that remain are wonderfully varied in mood and gesture and in the treatment of string sonority. The title *Suite* suggests a Baroque pastiche, an impression reinforced by the fact that the work begins with a Praeludium and ends with a Fugue. But there is nothing drily academic about this songful score. The "Praeludium" takes flight from a descending fifth, B-E, in the first violins, a graceful melodic gesture initiating a gradual and beautifully planned rising line. A more vigorous middle section modulates rapidly and leads to the climactic return of the opening theme an octave higher (and doubled in octaves in the first violins). The movement dies away with reminiscences of the opening B-E, the last breathed out as a pensive farewell by the cellos at the very close.

The middle movement combines the lightness of a traditional scherzo (here made lighter still by being played pizzicato throughout) with the expressive intensity of a lyric slow movement (which functions here as the contrasting middle section). The closing fugue is anything but academic. The only full fugal exposition occurs at the outset. Thereafter we are treated to a series of varying episodes featuring the interplay of tiny rhythmic motives excerpted from the fugue subject, each time culminating in a single statement of the subject proper. (One of these episodes, for just an instant, plays with the characteristic rhythmic figure that was all the rage in 1907 in the new music known as ragtime--that last thing one would expect to hear in a sturdy, Germanic fugue by a cultivated Boston composer!) The final statement, a climactic return to E minor, is fully harmonized in a densely rich scoring ending in a strongly asserted plagal cadence.

© Steven Ledbetter

ELLIOTT CARTER (1908 - 2012) ***Elegy for string orchestra, Opus 3***

Elliott Carter is one of the supreme contemporary masters of American music. Much of his work is daunting in its rhythmic complexity, requiring many hearings to clarify and appreciate. Much of his early work, though, is fresh and approachable in its lyrical diatonicism, while at the same time offering insights into the mature composer he became. Carter grew up hearing the music of Stravinsky and Schoenberg and other modernists, but he also learned (partly through his Harvard roommate) much of the music of the Elizabethan era and became, at the same time, extraordinarily well-read in subjects ranging from literature to mathematics.

The poignant *Elegy* was composed for a private concert organized by the League of Composers. In its original form, for cello and piano, the work was performed only once. In 1946 Carter spent a summer at Camp Lanier in Maine, where he encountered a string quartet made up of players from the Boston Symphony. For this ensemble he rewrote the *Elegy*, preserving the cello line, but substantially rewriting the original piano part. This version seemed to him more successful, and in 1952 he acceded to a publisher's request to arrange it for string orchestra. A still later version, dating from 1961, returns to a solo stringed instrument (now viola) with piano accompaniment, but is otherwise substantially reworked to differentiate the two instruments polyphonically, in much the style Carter had created with his Cello Sonata.

The *Elegy* expresses a single melodic impulse that grows and builds slowly to a climax, then recedes into tranquility. The independent contrapuntal voices of the different instrumental parts, only rarely imitative, suggest the influence of Elizabethan fantasies for a consort of viols, with many of which the *Elegy* shares a sober, but delicate, lyricism.

© Steven Ledbetter

JENNIFER HIGDON (1962 -) ***String from Concerto for Orchestra***

Jennifer Higdon is one of America's most acclaimed figures in contemporary classical music, receiving the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in Music for her *Violin Concerto*, a 2010 Grammy for her *Percussion Concerto*, a 2018 Grammy for her *Viola Concerto* and, most recently, a 2020 Grammy for her *Harp Concerto*. Higdon's first opera, *Cold Mountain*, won the International Opera Award for Best World Premiere and the opera recording was nominated for 2 Grammy awards. In 2018, Higdon received the prestigious Nemmers Prize from Northwestern University which is awarded to contemporary classical composers of exceptional achievement who have significantly influenced the field of composition. Higdon enjoys several hundred performances a year of her works and her works have been recorded on more than seventy CD's.

"String" is a sonic celebration of the wonderful sound of the string instruments of the orchestra. From solos to massed playing, and from plucking to bowing, this work romps from beginning to end, rushing headlong into what amounts to a rolling fanfare for the instrument. This work is part of my "Concerto for Orchestra".

(Program note provided by composer.)

JUDITH LANG ZAIMONT (1945 -) *Elegy for Strings from Symphony* No. 2: *Remember Me*

"In (*Symphony No. 2*), I've tried to mask nothing, and speak purely in every moment." - Judith Lang Zaimont

In the close-knit yet harmonically luxuriant *Elegy*, a single long melody begins in measure one and is spun out through the movement in one continuous song. Tonally pristine, the movement has an intentional British cast. Phrases proceed in long arches, and the sense of semi-cadence ('half-close') is purposeful, to honor the memory of my aunt, Mildred Barret-Leonard Friedman, who died at too early an age in autumn 1997.

(Program note provided by composer.)

SAMUEL BARBER (1910-1981) *Serenade, Opus 1*

As a teenager, Samuel Barber demonstrated the range of his musical talents over nine years of study at the newly-founded Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. He was an exceptional pianist, a fine singer, and, increasingly, a composer of significance in the development of a strain of American music that composers sought in the second quarter of the twentieth century. His composition teacher Rosario Scalero did not teach by offering "rules" of composition, but rather by urging his students to study works of the masters to deduce that effective approach to composition. With a student as gifted as the young Sam Barber, this proved an effective approach, reminding him always that the music should "breathe." Even before he began studying with Scalero, in his middle teens, Barber composed actively, mostly for his own instrument, the piano, or for piano and voice. Songs came naturally to a singer, and his aunt was the great Louise Homer, who included some of his songs on her recitals.

With Scalero, Barber began to work on instrumental genres as well. Among his first such pieces were a violin sonata and the work that he chose to label Opus 1, the *Serenade*, intended for either string quartet or string orchestra. In 1928, Barber made his first trip to Europe with Scalero and a few other young musicians from Curtis. He spent a good part of the time in France, to improve his already excellent command of the language. He completed the score of Opus 1 that December, when he was eighteen years old. It is a compact work in three movements, in which his teacher recognized several elements of the string quartet of the great Austrian composer of songs, Hugo Wolf. Wolf transcribed his quartet into a work for string orchestra under the title *Italian Serenade*, which may have given Barber the impetus to suggest that his piece could be played either by solo or multiple strings. Barber's uncle and frequent advisor, the composer Sidney Homer, wondered why he had chosen the title *Serenade*. "Are you really serenading and to whom?" He lamented the limitations of titles on pieces of music to something generic like "serenade." This comment might have induced Barber to include less common titles for later works (such as "Essay for Orchestra" on three later occasions).

Still, the three movements of the *Serenade* are lyrically expressive, with songful moods. The slow opening of the first movement provides the musical germ to the work with a series of suspensions that suggest sighs. It turns into an allegro section that reworks this opening material compactly and then in a broader span. The slow middle movement includes more musical sighs in a broadly conceived descending scale. The finale is a lively dance that comes closest, in mood and spirit, to the Wolf serenade, though it is entirely original in its material. This score set the path for several of Barber's future works for strings, eventually culminating in the *Adagio for Strings*, Opus 11, that became one of the lasting favorites of his output.

© Steven Ledbetter

MICHAEL TORKE (1961 -) *December*

I remember experiencing a kind of cozy cheer in the early days of winter back in suburban Milwaukee, when, on the rounds of my afternoon paper route, I would anticipate with pleasure the forecast of the season's first snow. The cold and the precipitation never bothered me; I loved the season: young girls wrapped up in parkas with only their bright faces showing, outdoor Christmas lights being strung out on the front lawns, warm meals waiting when I got back home.

Music never literally represents things, but it does evoke feelings, impressions, and sometimes memories. In writing this piece, I noticed that the music that came out didn't just refer to itself—it is my habit to set up certain compositional operations to give each piece its own profile—but that the music seemed to refer to things outside of itself. This is something I discover as I'm writing; it is not that I set out intending to describe the last month of the year through music; rather, the associations creep up on me, as I'm composing.

I had originally called this piece *Rain Changing to Snow* because at first the listener might hear a kind of musical 'precipitation', a resultant wetness that comes from some of the strings sustaining notes that are moving in the other instruments. And as this develops, the music moves to a more tranquil key, where it sounds as though the rain has turned to snow and there is a strange stillness everywhere.

But to me the music is about more than meteorological patterns. In my goal to write more thematic music which is less process oriented, I believe this music can afford a wide range of responses in the listener. I am against music that is merely cerebral, and I welcome the simple, physical experience of listening, and responding directly, without undue brain circuitry.

(Program note provided by composer.)

WILLIAM GRANT STILL (1895 - 1978) *Danzas de Panama*

The prolific composer William Grant Still was experienced in just about every aspect of music in American life, and his talents were such that he became a pathbreaker in all of them. He was the first Black composer to have a symphony performed by a major orchestra, the first to conduct a major symphony orchestra, the first to have an opera produced by a major opera company, and the first to conduct a white radio studio orchestra. He worked in both "popular" and "classical" styles. After studies at Wilberforce College (which he left without a degree) he worked for W. C. Handy. Later he enrolled at Oberlin Conservatory, where he was encouraged to compose. He played the oboe in theater orchestras (including that for Sissle and Blake's landmark show *Shuffle Along*) and studied in New York with Varèse. George Chadwick offered him a scholarship at the New England Conservatory and encouraged him to compose specifically American music. He was an arranger for Handy, Paul Whiteman, and Artie Shaw. He conducted the CBS studio orchestra for the radio show "Deep River Hour" in New York, and he worked in Hollywood for films and television (including "Gunsmoke" and "Perry Mason"). Still was a prolific composer in all musical forms, creating a total of five symphonies, nine operas, four ballets, and many other works. His *Afro-American Symphony* was performed by the Rochester Philharmonic in 1931; it marked a breakthrough for serious concert music by black composers.

In a career so long and so marked by prolific creation in every possible medium, it has been difficult to get a firm handle on Still's full achievement. But with the substantial number of revivals of his work in the year of his centennial, 1995, and a large number of new recordings and reissues of older recordings, it has become clear that he was a composer of extraordinary range, warmth, and color.

STILL *Danzas de Panama* (continued)

Whether writing music in a consciously “ethnic” style (Latin American rhythms, African-American spirituals, or even Jewish melodies) or in jazzy arrangements or serious concert works, Still was a master of all he undertook.

Danzas de Panama is a suite of four dance melodies that had been collected by Elizabeth Waldo. Still arranged them first for string quintet, then again for string orchestra. In both versions he was concerned to capture the spirit of the original dances and their Panamanian character, and he did this by calling for special effects from the instruments. The *Tamborito* is, as its name (“little drum”) suggests, basically a percussive dance, and Still calls for the players to rap with their knuckles on the backs of their instruments. The *Mejorana* is a dance in improvisatory style usually played by several guitars (in counterpoint) and a three-stringed native instrument similar to a violin; such a combination is easily adapted to the instruments of a string orchestra. The *Punto* is a graceful dance in 6/8 time with two sections whose names suggest foot movement: *Zapateo* (“shoe tapping”) and *Paseo* (“promenade”). The final dance, *Cumbia*, is the most sensuous of them all and the one least linked in any way to European dance elements. When danced in Panama, the women move through the streets holding lighted candles above their heads, while the men dance around them in an abandoned manner.

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