

PROGRAM NOTES BY KEN MELTZER

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Friday, April 12 at 11 am
Trinity United Methodist Church

EDVARD GRIEG (1843–1907)
Praeludium from Holberg Suite,
Opus 40 (1884)

Grandmother's Minuet from Lyric Pieces,
Opus 68, No. 2 (1899)

Gjendine's Lullaby, Opus 66, No. 19 (1896)

March of the Trolls from Lyric Pieces,
Opus 54, No. 3 (1891)

ISAAC ALBÉNIZ (1860–1909)
Asturias from Suite española No. 1,
Opus 47 (1886–1891)

ANTONIO VIVALDI (1678–1741)
L'Estate (Summer), Opus 8,
No. 2 in G minor
I. *Allegro non molto*
II. *Adagio; Presto*
III. *Presto*

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
(1756–1791)
“Rondo alla Turca” from Piano Sonata
in A Major, K. 331 (ca. 1783)

LEONARD BERNSTEIN (1918–1990)
Medley from West Side Story (1957)

PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY
(1840–1893)
Valse sentimentale from Six Pieces,
Opus 51, No. 6 (1882)

HARALD SAEVERUD (1897–1992)
Kjempeviseslåtten (Ballad of Revolt) from
Slåtter og Stev fra Siljustøl (Tunes and
Dances from Siljustøl), Opus 22 (1943)

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA (1921–1992)
Oblivion (1984)

GEORGES BIZET (1838–1875)
Suite from Carmen (1875)

Tine Thing Helseth, trumpet
Guro Bjørnstad Kraft, trumpet
Elin Holmen Kurverud, trumpet
Maren Ingeborg Tjernsli, trumpet
Lena Wik, horn
Ingebjørg Klovholt, trombone
Tone Christin Lium Røssland, trombone
Frøydis Aslesen, trombone
Astri Karoline Ellann, bass trombone
Karin Nordli, tuba

Praeludium from Holberg Suite,
Opus 40 (1884)

Approximate performance time is 3 minutes.
 SMF performance history: 4/02/14

Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg wrote his *Holberg Suite* as part of the celebrations commemorating the bicentennial of the birth of his compatriot, writer Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754). Considered the father of Scandinavian literature, Holberg was often called “the Molière of the North.” Like Grieg, Holberg was born in Bergen, Norway. The *Holberg Suite*, originating as a series of solo piano pieces, evoked the mood and style of the Baroque era in which Holberg lived. Grieg later arranged the work as a “Suite in the Olden Style for String Orchestra.” The Suite’s first-movement *Praeludium* opens with a galloping figure that is prominent throughout.

Grandmother's Minuet from Lyric Pieces,
Opus 68, No. 2 (1899)

Approximate performance time is 2 minutes.
 SMF performance history: SMF premiere

Gjendine's Lullaby, Opus 66, No. 19 (1896)

Approximate performance time is 2 minutes.
 SMF performance history: SMF premiere

March of the Trolls from Lyric Pieces,
Opus 54, No. 3 (1891)

Approximate performance time is 4 minutes.
 SMF performance history: SMF premiere

Throughout his life, Grieg created numerous works for solo piano. Between 1867–1901, Grieg composed ten volumes of solo piano works entitled *Lyric Pieces*, comprising 66 pieces in all. *Grandmother's Minuet*, a sprightly dance in triple meter, is the second work in the collection of six pieces included in Book IX. The *March of the Trolls*, the third work of Book V, juxtaposes two vigorous episodes with a lyric interlude. The haunting *Gjendine's Lullaby* is the last of Grieg's *19 Norwegian Folk Tunes*.

Asturias from Suite española No. 1, Opus
47 (1886–1891)

Approximate performance time is 6 minutes.
 SMF performance history: 3/26/09

The Spanish composer and pianist Isaac Albéniz began work on his popular first *Suite española* in 1885. Albéniz composed the Suite pursuant to an arrangement with the Spanish publisher, Benito Zozaya. The plan was for Albéniz to compose a series of eight pieces, each relating to a specific Spanish town or region.

By 1886, Albéniz had completed four of the eight pieces—*Granada, Cataluña, Sevilla, and Cuba*—which were then published by Zozaya. Although Albéniz completed the other four movements (*Cádiz, Asturias, Aragón, and Castilla*) by 1891, almost ten years elapsed before their publication. The reasons for the delay are not entirely certain. But by 1901, Zozaya's firm was out of business, and the music was published by another concern.

The eight movements of Albéniz's first *Suite española* were published collectively as the Spanish composer's Opus 47. Albéniz composed a second *Suite*, Opus 97, in the late 1880s. The captivating folk rhythms and melodies of Albéniz's two *Spanish Suites* have long earned favor with a broad spectrum of audiences.

The brilliant *Asturias*, subtitled *Leyenda* (*Legend*), from the Suite No. 1, evokes the irrepressible spirit of the *flamenco*.

L'Estate (Summer), from Le quattro
stagioni (The Four Seasons), Opus 8,
Nos. 1–4 (ca. 1725)

Approximate performance time is 10 minutes.
 SMF performance history: 3/29/18, 4/03/16, 4/05/11

Antonio Vivaldi's *Le quattro stagioni* (*The Four Seasons*) is one of the most well-known and beloved works in the entire classical repertoire. Originally scored for solo violin, strings, and continuo, *Le quattro stagioni* is a collection of four three-movement concertos. Each concerto depicts one of the seasons, proceeding from spring through winter. The 1725 score of *The Four Seasons* includes sonnets (that may have been written by the composer), describing the

programs for each of the twelve movements. A prose translation of the original Italian poem for *L'Estate* (Summer), is included below.

***L'Estate* (Summer)
Opus 8, No. 2, in G minor**

I. *Allegro non molto*—

Under the heat of the burning summer sun,
Languish man and flock; the pine is parched.
The cuckoo finds its voice, and suddenly,
The turtledove and goldfinch sing.
A gentle breeze blows,
But suddenly, the north wind appears.
The shepherd weeps because, overhead,
Lies the fierce storm, and his destiny.



II. *Adagio; Presto*—

His tired limbs are deprived of rest
By his fear of lightning and fierce thunder,
And by furious swarms of flies and hornets.

III. *Presto*—



Alas, how just are his fears,
Thunder and lightning fill the Heavens,
and the hail
Slices the tops of the corn and other grain.

“Rondo alla Turca” from Piano Sonata in A Major, K. 331 (ca. 1783)

 *Approximate performance time is 4 minutes.*
 *SMF performance history: 3/20/14, 3/23/07, 3/27/05*

At the time Mozart composed his Piano Sonata in A Major, K. 331, percussive “Turkish” (or “Janissary”) music was popular in Vienna. Mozart had previously employed “Turkish” effects in such works as his Violin Concerto No. 5 (1775), and the opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (1782). The Sonata’s rondo finale opens with the central “Turkish” melody, in A minor. The music alternates between the minor and major throughout, all the while maintaining a vibrant, playful character. The percussive “Turkish” elements are most evident in the rousing A Major concluding section.

Medley from *West Side Story* (1957)

 *Approximate performance time is 12 minutes.*
 *SMF performance history: 4/03/10*



West Side Story, a modernization of Shakespeare’s tragic love story *Romeo and Juliet*, premiered on August 19, 1957, at the National Theater in Washington, DC. The production featured one of the most remarkable assemblages of talent in the history of musical theater—the book by Arthur Laurents, lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, music by Leonard Bernstein, with the entire production directed and choreographed by Jerome Robbins.

After performances in Washington, DC and Philadelphia, *West Side Story* opened at the Winter Garden in New York City on September 26, 1957. After 734 performances, the production closed on June 27, 1959. A tour followed, as well as a Hollywood movie in 1961. *West Side Story* has remained in the repertoire ever since, and its music is an integral part of American culture.

One of the miracles of American musical theater, *West Side Story* is a remarkable fusion of drama, music, and dance, all placed at the service of a powerful and timeless story. It also represents an amazing synthesis of popular and classical elements, a sublime marriage of the Broadway stage with the opera and ballet houses. As Bernstein wrote after the premiere:

I am now convinced that what we dreamed all these years *is* possible; because there stands that tragic story, with a theme as profound as love versus hate, with all the theatrical risks of death and racial issues and young performers and “serious” music and complicated balletics—and it all added up for the audiences and critics.



***Valse sentimentale* from Six Pieces, Opus 51, No. 6 (1882)**

 *Approximate performance time is 3 minutes.*
 *SMF performance history: SMF premiere*

Tchaikovsky composed his Six Pieces for solo piano at the request of the publishers, the Jurgenson brothers. At the time of the commission, Tchaikovsky was at work on the sketch for his opera *Mazeppa*, based upon an epic historical poem by Pushkin. Tchaikovsky



completed the Six Pieces in just a few weeks’ time. The concluding *Sentimental Waltz*, in F minor, includes an A-flat Major interlude.

***Kjempeviseslåtten* (Ballad of Revolt) from *Slåtter og Stev fra Siljustøl* (Tunes and Dances from Siljustøl), Opus 22 (1943)**

 *Approximate performance time is 4 minutes.*
 *SMF performance history: SMF premiere*

Norwegian composer Harald Saeverud wrote his *Ballad of Revolt* in 1943, following the Nazi occupation of his beloved country. Saeverud acknowledged that he composed the piece in reaction to the sight of a Nazi barracks outside of Bergen. The brief work expresses Norway’s fierce spirit of resistance in the face of oppression. Saeverud originally scored the *Ballad of Revolt* for solo piano, and later arranged the piece for orchestra.

***Oblivion* (1984)**

 *Approximate performance time is 4 minutes.*
 *SMF performance history: SMF premiere*

As a youth, Astor Piazzolla spent time both in his native Argentina and New York City’s Little Italy. During that period, Piazzolla was exposed to classical and popular music, including the tango. In 1954, Piazzolla moved to Paris, where he studied with Nadia Boulanger. Piazzolla’s classical works failed to impress Boulanger. “This music is well written,” Boulanger observed, “but it lacks feeling.” But when Piazzolla performed one of his tangos, Boulanger exclaimed: “This is Piazzolla! Don’t ever leave it!” This marked a turning point for Piazzolla. As he later recalled, Boulanger “helped me find myself.”


Piazzolla “threw away all the other music and, in 1954, started working on my New Tango.” This “New Tango” infused the seductive Latin American dance with elements of jazz and modern classical music. Piazzolla encountered considerable initial resistance to his “New Tango,” particularly in his native Argentina. However, by the time of his death in 1992, Astor Piazzolla was mourned as a national hero. The admiration for Astor Piazzolla extended far beyond his native land. He earned the acclaim of some of the world’s greatest musicians, including such

classical artists as Gidon Kremer, Yo-Yo Ma, and the Kronos String Quartet.

This concert features Piazzolla's *Oblivion*, music written for the 1984 movie, *Enrico IV (Henry IV)*.

Suite from *Carmen* (1875)

 Approximate performance time is 7 minutes.

 SMF performance history: SMF premiere

Georges Bizet's *Carmen* has long been one of the cornerstones of the opera repertoire. But the premiere, which took place in Paris on March 3, 1875, was a failure. Bizet died three months later, at the age of only 36. Some have suggested that Bizet's death was hastened by these circumstances.

In truth, it's not difficult to understand the reasons for *Carmen*'s early lack of acceptance. The plot, based upon an 1845 novel by Prosper Mérimée, concerns the story of a gypsy who has multiple affairs, and is murdered on stage by one of her jealous lovers. This did not sit well with the audience of the Paris Opéra-Comique, a theater usually reserved for light opera and family entertainment.

With its graphic depiction of the passion and violence of everyday life, *Carmen* anticipates by fifteen years the Italian *verismo* (or "Realism") movement and such operas as Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* (1890) and Leoncavallo's *I pagliacci* (1892). Bizet's masterful and dramatic employment of various melodic leitmotifs is another aspect that looks forward to operas of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Over time, the elements that caused such a stir at *Carmen*'s premiere made the opera a riveting theatrical experience, beloved by audiences around the world. And Bizet's genius for melody and rich, inventive orchestral sonorities helped to make *Carmen* a mainstay not only in the opera house, but on the orchestral concert stage and in popular culture as well. Bizet's *Carmen* is a work that continues to fascinate, beguile, and intoxicate audiences. Almost 150 years after *Carmen*'s premiere, it is clear that the gypsy has lost none of her seductive powers.