Sonatina in G major for Violin and Piano, Op. 100
Antonín Dvořák

- Born September 8, 1841, in Nelahozeves, Bohemia.
- Died May 1, 1904, in Prague.
- *Composed in 1893.*
- First CMS performance on November 17, 1985, by violinist Josef Suk and pianist Lee Luvisi.
- Duration: 19 minutes

In 1891 Antonín Dvořák received an offer he couldn't refuse from Jeanette Thurber, a visionary philanthropist who had recently founded the National Conservatory of Music of America. Her goal was to create a place where all were welcome under a nondiscrimination policy to foster the growth of musical arts at home in the United States—a deliberate effort to keep waves of talented youngsters from going off to Europe to study, live, and work. She also hoped, in an era in which the preoccupation of many European composers was exploring "national" sounds, to discover the answer to the question "What is American music?" Thurber recognized that Dvořák's distinctive style came from integrating the sonorities of his native Czech folk music with the broader European concert music tradition and invited him to take an appointment as Artistic Director and Professor of Composition for what equates to roughly half a million dollars today. Dvořák, along with his wife and two children, set sail and arrived in New York City on September 26, 1892.

In his quest to find the American spirit in music, Dvořák collaborated with Black students at the conservatory, including Henry Thacker Burleigh, who introduced him to the spirituals and plantation songs of enslaved peoples, and with *New York Tribune* music critic Henry Krehbiel, who provided transcriptions of Indigenous North American melodies. Dvořák asserted that the elements found in these traditions were the sounds that would form the foundation of a uniquely American music, including, as his biographer Klaus Döge recorded, "…pentatonism in the melodic line, a flattened leading note, plagal cadences, drone accompaniment, rhythmic ostinato, and strongly syncopated rhythms." Fast-forward to American music in the 20th century and beyond, and Dvořák was right.

Dvořák's time in the United States may have been musically fruitful, but it was in many ways personally unfulfilling. He was never at ease in New York City, and his generously compensated position became untenable by 1895, when Thurber found she could not pay his full salary due to economic difficulties. However, there was one place the composer called an "ideal spot" during his tenure in this country: a small town in Iowa called Spillville with a large Czech immigrant population, where he spent the summer of 1893. There he wrote two chamber pieces that would become among his most beloved, the String Quartet in F major and the String Quintet in E-flat major, both known by the nickname "American." The same year, after returning to New York, Dvořák penned the Sonatina and dedicated it to his children, celebrating its auspicious opus number, 100. Unfolding over four movements, the Sonatina shares the abundance of charming melodies that characterizes the other "American" pieces. In particular, the melancholic second

movement, based on a melody Dvořák is said to have sketched on his shirt sleeve during a visit to Minnehaha Falls, Minnesota, gained attention of its own—so much so that legendary violinist Fritz Kreisler occasionally programmed it on his recitals.

Quintet for Piano and Strings in G Minor, Op. 1
Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

- Born August 15, 1875, in London.
- Died September 1, 1912, in London.
- *Composed in 1893.*
- Tonight is the first CMS performance of this piece.
- Duration: 27 minutes.

On September 2, 1912, *The Times* in London ran the obituary for Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. It read, in part: "We regret to announce that Mr. Coleridge-Taylor, the composer, died yesterday . . . he left his home Wednesday afternoon, intending to visit the Crystal Palace, but was taken ill near West Croydon Railway Station and fell. Recovering sufficiently to return home by tram, he at once went to bed and a doctor who was called stated that he was suffering from influenza. Pneumonia supervened and Mr. Coleridge-Taylor died at 6 o'clock last evening. The sudden death of Mr. Coleridge-Taylor at the age of 37 will be felt as a serious loss by all who are interested in musical matters."

The son of an African doctor and an Englishwoman, Coleridge-Taylor showed an early talent for music as both a violinist and composer. His first work was published when he was only 16 years old, and his first symphony was written four years later. He went on to study at the Royal College of Music with renowned professor Charles Villiers Stanford, alongside his contemporaries and classmates Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gustav Holst (whom Coleridge-Taylor had beat out for a scholarship).

Success came swiftly for Coleridge-Taylor in the days immediately following his graduation. In 1898 he was commissioned by the Three Choirs Festival on Edward Elgar's recommendation, the result of which was the secular cantata *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, based on the poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. It became a hit on the scale of Handel's *Messiah*. Multiple trips to the United States soon followed in 1904, 1906, and 1910, during which he was invited to visit President Roosevelt at the White House and embarked on multi-city tours across the United States, conducting his own works and performing alongside African-American musicians and composers such as Henry Thacker Burleigh. Upon returning to England, Coleridge-Taylor enjoyed a thriving career as a conductor and teacher, and wrote hundreds of works before his premature death.

The Quintet for Piano and Strings comes from Coleridge-Taylor's student days, during a time when he was particularly focused on chamber music. The work is one of singular grandeur and elegance, showcasing the astonishing sophistication of the teenage Coleridge-Taylor and rivaling pieces by composers twice his age. From the dramatic opening block chords in the first movement the music quickly shifts gears to its sweeping primary theme. Each transition between

sections is managed effortlessly with a near-Mozartian ease. The second movement is a jewel box of sparkling melancholy melody; undulating rhythmic patterns and syncopations contrasted with a dance-like middle section propel the third movement forward. A flourish ushers in the fourth and final movement, which features a fugal section that begins in the strings before dropping out to frame the solo statement of the fugue theme in the piano. The subsequent return of the primary theme brings the work toward its conclusion.

***Rêve d'enfant* for Violin and Piano, Op. 14**
Eugène Ysaÿe

- Born July 16, 1858, in Liège.
- Died May 12, 1931, in Brussels.
- *Composed in 1895–1900.*
- First CMS performance on October 26, 2014, by violinist Yura Lee and pianist Anne-Marie McDermott.
- Duration: 4 minutes

Eugène Ysaÿe was not showcased as a child prodigy but displayed formidable early talent that earned him the opportunity in his mid-teenage years to study with some of the most renowned violinists in history, including Henryk Wieniawski and Henry Vieuxtemps. A notable episode in his youth was the opportunity to play for the legendary Joseph Joachim, who was a close associate of Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, and many others. After the meeting, Joachim was said to have quipped, "I never heard the violin played like that before," highlighting Ysaÿe's already characteristic style featuring a broader vibrato than was typical for the time, and a highly expressive quality of interpretation that some at the time criticized as self-indulgent but posterity would acknowledge as masterful.

Among those who supported his career were fellow performers like Anton Rubenstein, who helped by securing performance opportunities, and composers such as César Franck, whose violin sonata was wedding present for Ysaÿe, as well as Claude Debussy, whose string quartet was premiered by Ysaÿe's ensemble. Though Ysaÿe was dedicated to the art of chamber music, his commitments in that discipline would soon give way to increasing concentration on performing as a soloist with a small, alternating group of collaborative pianists, including his brother Theophile, Ferruccio Busoni, and Raoul Pugno. His work as a recitalist allowed him to make a significant impact by programming mostly solo sonatas—an uncommon practice at the time.

Ysaÿe's innovation extended beyond the kinds of concerts he gave into the broad array of music he composed. In addition to the usual concertos, cadenzas, fantasies, and other showpieces, he also added to the repertoire remarkably ingenious works for solo violin such as the six sonatas, each dedicated to a fellow violinist, that are brilliant for their blend of modern, dissonant sonorities with lingering Romanticism. His oeuvre also includes multiple chamber works, as well as an opera in the Walloon language from near the end of his life.

Over the course of his career Ysaÿe had a long and rich association with musical establishments in United States, which would culminate in his leadership of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra between 1918 and 1922 as their conductor, a role that allowed him to continue making music when injury curtailed his career as a performer. His U.S. debut as a soloist was made some twenty years earlier with the New York Philharmonic, in November of 1894, which was also the year his son Antoine was born. *Rêve d'enfant* (*Child's Dream*) is a lullaby dedicated "À mon p'tit Antoine" ("To my little Antoine") during Ysaÿe's years on tour away from his family. As a result, there is a sense of longing permeating the work. It is not a simple, carefree lullaby, but something more complicated. The gently swaying main theme becomes overwhelmed in the middle section with harmonies that continuously evade resolution, conveying emotional unrest. Steadying itself again, the piece returns to the opening theme, wistfully coming to rest.

Quintet in A major for Piano, Two Violins, Viola, and Cello, B. 155, Op. 81
Antonín Dvořák

- Born September 8, 1841, in Nelahozeves, Bohemia.
- Died May 1, 1904, in Prague.
- *Composed in 1887.*
- First CMS performance on December 11, 1970, by pianist Richard Goode, violinists Arnold Steinhardt and John Dalley, violist Michael Tree, and cellist David Soyer.
- Duration: 38 minutes

For many years Dvořák worked as a professional musician in Prague, first in dance bands, and then eventually as part of the orchestra in the Provisional Theatre, which opened in 1862 as a home for Czech arts in the Austro-Hungarian empire. It was during his time as a member of its viola section that he had the opportunity to play under the baton of a touring Richard Wagner, and later under Bedřich Smetana, who became the orchestra's conductor in 1866. Composing was something Dvořák did on the side, earning occasional subsidiary income from his works, but by 1871 he made the decision to leave performing to focus on writing. In an effort to distinguish himself, Dvořák destroyed earlier works he found unsatisfactory and worked toward cultivating a new voice infused with Slavic idioms that slowly began to capture attention. Among those who took notice was none other than Johannes Brahms, who for a few years had judged the applications for the Austrian State Stipendium, an award for which Dvořák applied annually. In 1877, Brahms wrote to his publisher, Fritz Simrock:

> *As for the state stipendium, for several years I have enjoyed works sent in by Antonín Dvořák (pronounced Dvorschak) of Prague. This year he has sent works including a volume of 10 duets for two sopranos and piano, which seem to me very pretty, and a practical proposition for publishing. . . . Play them through and you will like them as much as I do. As a publisher, you will be particularly pleased with their piquancy. . . . Dvořák has written all manner of things: operas (Czech), symphonies, quartets, piano*

> *pieces. In any case, he is a very talented man. Moreover, he is poor! I ask you to think about it! The duets will show you what I mean, and could be a 'good article.'*

The support and mentorship Brahms offered Dvořák changed his career forever, akin to what Robert Schumann's endorsement had done for Brahms in his own youth. This chain of influence, from Schumann to Brahms and on to Dvořák, also happened to be reflected in a genre to which each of them contributed a zenithal example: the piano quintet.

Schumann's piano quintet is broadly considered the first of the modern, mature iterations of the form. His approach was conversational, rather than simply trading solos and supporting accompaniment. Twenty years later, Brahms followed with his piano quintet. Both had infused their quintets with the scope and drama of a symphony, while keeping the scale intimate. Dvořák's first piano quintet, Op. 5, was ultimately scrapped after more than one attempt. His second effort became Op. 81, a work that opens quietly with a gently rocking duo between the piano and cello in an exchange that sounds more like the middle of an ongoing idea than a beginning. Suddenly, the rest of the ensemble abruptly enters, nearly catching the listener off-guard as the music is propelled by a brilliant, shimmering urgency. The second movement is built around a traditional Slavic musical form called a dumka, which is pensive and shadowed. The upbeat *Scherzo* styled as a furiant, a rapid Bohemian dance, alters the melancholic mood before the remarkable conclusion that juxtaposes the drama of fugue with a quiet chorale.

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