



## Legato in Times of Staccato

### Playlist 17 - Wednesday, July 29th, 2020

Curated by Music Director, Fouad Fakhouri

#### [Brahms: Tragic Overture, Op. 81](#)

Brahms' Tragic Overture does not reference any specific tragedy, and in fact was composed while Brahms was on vacation in Austria in the summer of 1880. Brahms composed two concert overtures during this time: the lighthearted Academic Festival Overture and the grievous Tragic Overture. Though critics have debated on the sources of inspiration for the Tragic Overture, Brahms simply explained that the celebratory nature of the Academic Festival Overture led him to compose a counterpart, commenting: "I could not refuse my melancholy nature the satisfaction of composing an overture for tragedy." Listeners are meant to experience the woeful spirit of tragedy rather than envision a particular narrative.

#### [Beethoven: Symphony No. 4](#)

Beethoven's Fourth Symphony is the least known and performed of all his symphonies. Overshadowed by the prodigious Third and Fifth symphonies, the Fourth is more comparable to Beethoven's earlier symphonic works. Commissioned in 1806, Beethoven put aside work on the Fifth Symphony to compose the Fourth along with other works. After its public premiere in 1808, critics generally responded positively to the piece, but noted its similarities to the composer's more classically-styled First and Second symphonies.

#### [Schubert: Symphony No. 5](#)

By age 19, Franz Schubert had already composed an impressive amount of music, including three symphonies, four operas, two masses, and hundreds of songs. In 1816, he would compose roughly 200 more compositions, including his Fourth and Fifth Symphonies. Symphony No. 5 is modeled after the classical symphonies of Mozart and is the only symphony that Schubert composed, besides the Unfinished, without a slow introduction to open the work.

#### [Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 2 + Encore](#)



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Beethoven composed his Piano Concerto No. 2 in 1795. Like his other early works, the piece is composed in the classical style of Mozart and Haydn. The performer in this video is renowned classical pianist, Martha Argerich. Born in Buenos Aires, Argerich made her concert debut at age 8, and she later became the first pianist from the Western Hemisphere to win first prize at the Chopin Competition in Warsaw.

### Rachmaninoff: Symphony No. 2

Following the disastrous premiere of his First Symphony in 1897, Rachmaninoff fell into a deep, 3-year-long depression that threatened to destroy his career. After seeking professional help, he gained back his confidence, and in 1906 he found the courage to attempt another symphony. Rachmaninoff conducted the premiere of his Second Symphony in 1908, and the work was well-received by audiences and critics alike. The piece remained popular during Rachmaninoff's life and is still one his most beloved orchestral works today.

### J. S. Bach: "The Goldberg Variations"

In 1741, Bach published a long and complicated keyboard piece, calling it "Aria with diverse variations for a harpsichord with two manuals"(keyboards). According to Harvard professor, Christoph Wolff, "Bach wanted to show what was possible for keyboard in terms of technical development, virtuosic finesse and compositional sophistication". The performer in this video, Glenn Gould, was at the age of 22 when he first recorded the Goldberg Variations in 1955. At the time, the piece was considered too difficult and risky, but Gould's recording exceeded expectations and became a bestseller.

### Dvořák: Symphony No. 7

Originally published as Symphony No. 2, Symphony No. 7, also known as the "tragic symphony", was in fact the seventh symphony Dvořák wrote, but only his second to be published. He admired Johannes Brahms so much that the premier of Brahms Third Symphony prompted Dvořák to start working on his seventh symphony. A month later, he found inspiration for the piece at the Prague Railway Station where troops were arriving in Prague for a special concert to support the early struggle for a Czech homeland. Dvořák was inspired by his intense patriotism and political leanings to compose music in which he believed "must be capable of stirring the world".



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### [Bach: Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 in D major, BWV 1050](#)

This concerto was written in 1719 for flute, violin, and harpsichord, which at the time, was a very popular chamber music ensemble. This piece is especially unique, as the harpsichord is both a solo and accompanying instrument. It is believed that Bach wrote this piece to "show off" a new harpsichord by Michael Mietke which he had brought back from Berlin for the Köthen court.

### [Vivaldi: Gloria](#)

Gloria in D is probably one of Vivaldi's most well-known sacred works. This piece was composed around 1715 for the all-girls orphanage choir of the "Ospedale della Pietà" in Venice. The orphanage was a home and school endowed by the girls' "anonymous" fathers, for the illegitimate daughters of Venetian nobleman and their mistresses. Vivaldi spent most of his career at the Ospedale as a priest, music teacher, and virtuoso violinist.

**\*\*\*To access the full Spotify playlist for week 17, click [here!](#)\*\*\***