

2019 Preview Notes • Week Four • Persons Auditorium

Saturday, August 3 at 8:00pm



Sieben frühe Lieder (1905-08)

Alban Berg

Born February 9, 1885

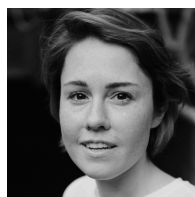
Died December 24, 1935

Duration: approx. 15 minutes

Last Marlboro performance: 1997

Berg's *Sieben frühe Lieder*, literally "seven early songs," were written while he was still a student of Arnold Schoenberg. In fact, three of these songs were premiered in a concert by Schoenberg's students in late 1907, around the time that Berg met the woman whom he would marry. In honor of the 10-year anniversary of this meeting, he later revisited and corrected a final version of the songs. The whole set was not published until 1928, when Berg arranged an orchestrated version. Each song features text by a different poet, so there is no through-narrative, however the songs all feature similar themes, revolving around night, longing, and infatuation.

Participants: Kristina Bachrach, *soprano*; Jonathan Biss, *piano*



Dolce Cantavi (2015)

Caroline Shaw

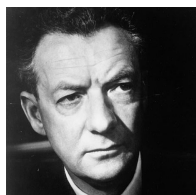
Born August 1, 1982

Duration: approx. 3 minutes

Marlboro premiere

As she has done in other works such as her piano concerto for Jonathan Biss, which was inspired by Beethoven's third piano concerto, Shaw looks into music history to compose music for the present. This piece in particular eschews fixed meter to recall the conventions of early music and to highlight the natural rhythms of the libretto. The text of this short but wonderfully involved song is taken from a poem by Francesca Turini Bufalini (1553-1641). Not only does the language harken back to an artistic period before our own, but the music flits through references of erstwhile luminaries such as Caccini, Strozzi, and Frescobaldi.

Participants: Kristina Bachrach, *soprano*; Rebecca Printz, *mezzo-soprano*; Sara Couden, *alto*



String Quartet No. 2 in C Major,
Op. 36 (1945)

Benjamin Britten

Born November 22, 1913

Died December 4, 1976

Duration: approx. 35 minutes

Last Marlboro performance: 2016

Britten's second string quartet was commissioned to honor the exact 250th anniversary of Henry Purcell's death. Purcell's music, and especially his use of ground bass, inspired Britten to use a similar technique in works such as his English song cycle *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne*. It is interesting to note that Britten wrote this string quartet during the same year that saw the unprecedented international success of his opera, *Peter Grimes*, which benefitted from Britten's use of an English text. Inspired by Purcell, this quartet utilizes the form of the chacony in its finale, which is longer than the first two movements put together. The chacony moves through 21 brilliant variations set over a ground bass line and ends as conclusively as possible with no fewer than 23 ringing C Major chords.

Participants: Stephanie Zyzak and Scott St. John, *violin*; Jing Peng, *viola*; Sayaka Selina, *cello*



Appalachian Spring: Suite for 13
Instruments (1944)

Aaron Copland

Born November 14, 1900

Died December 2, 1990

Duration: approx. 25 minutes

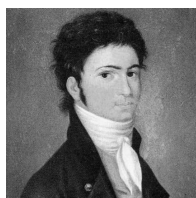
Last Marlboro performance: 2006

Though best known in its orchestral version, *Appalachian Spring* was originally written for 13 instruments. As a nod to Martha Graham, who commissioned the work, Copland simply referred to it as "ballet for Martha" until she suggested the title *Appalachian Spring*. With its sense of joyful vitality, the work is often associated with the season of springtime, but the source material of Martha's title is actually from a Hart Crane poem that describes a source of running water. There are eight sections to the piece, and together they explore both tender and vigorous aspects of the American spirit, played compellingly in this performance by eight foreign-born and five-US born musicians.

Participants: Marina Piccinini, *flute*; Alexander Fiterstein, *clarinet*; Catherine Chen, *bassoon*; Anna Polonsky, *piano*; Scott St. John, Alina Kobialka, Carmit Zori, and Rose Hsien, *violin*; Jing Peng and Rebecca Albers, *viola*; Yi Qun Xu and Brannon Cho, *cello*; William Langlie-Miletich, *double bass*

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Sunday, August 4 at 2:30pm



Quintet for Piano and Winds in E-flat Major, Op. 16 (1796)

Ludwig van Beethoven

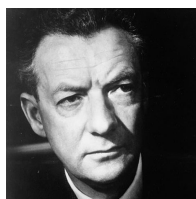
Born December 16, 1770 • Died March 26, 1827

Duration: approx. 25 minutes

Last Marlboro performance: 2018

This piece is scored for the same instruments and is in the same key as Mozart's wind quintet, to which it is often compared. Mozart said of his piece at the time of its premiere that it was "the best work" that he had yet written. Beethoven, on the other hand, went on to rework his quintet into a piano quartet. With demanding passages for the piano, the piece was first performed with the composer himself at the keyboard. The second movement begins by floating down in a stepwise manner, introducing a simple theme that becomes more complex as it is voiced by the different instruments in turn. The theme recalls the beginning of Zerlina's first aria in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, and the movement is indeed marked *Andante cantabile*. The gentleness of the second movement opens to a *Rondo* with plenty of improvisational opportunities for the piano to lead the piece to a spirited finale.

Participants: Mitchell Kuhn, *oboe*; Alexander Fiterstein, *clarinet*; Marlène Ngalissamy, *bassoon*; Yevhen Churikov, *horn*; Eric Lu, *piano*



Canticle II: Abraham and Isaac, Op. 51 (1952)

Benjamin Britten

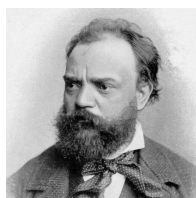
Born November 22, 1913 • Died December 4, 1976

Duration: approx. 15 minutes

Last Marlboro Performance: 2017

Britten wrote five canticles over the course of several decades, from 1947 to 1974. Three of them were memorials, and many of them tackle biblical themes, including the selection for this concert. Scored for alto, tenor, and piano, this piece portrays both the characters of Abraham and Isaac, through the individual singers, and the voice of God, which speaks through the two vocalists in unison. Britten specified that the singers face away from each other during the passages in which their voices depict the divine, and the effect suggests a God that is unified but pervasive, strong but contradictory, beautiful but dissimilar from any human individual. Britten composed *Canticle II* between working on *Billy Budd* and *Gloriana*, and the theatricality of its limited stage direction is certainly evocative of those larger-form works for which he is better known. However, the virtues of this piece lies in the purity and creativity of the human voice, which, when faced with challenges, much like Abraham, shows forth its strength.

Participants: Rebecca Printz, *alto*; Daniel McGrew, *tenor*; Lydia Brown, *piano*



String Quintet in E-flat Major, Op. 97, B. 180 (1893)

Antonín Dvořák

Born September 8, 1841 • Died May 1, 1904

Duration: approx. 40 minutes

Last Marlboro performance: 2016

Dvořák's String Quintet in E-flat Major is his third string quintet. Like all of Mozart's string quintets, including the one on last Friday's program, this is a so-called viola quintet since it is scored for string quintet plus an extra viola. Notably, Dvořák himself was a violist. This piece was written when the composer was living in Spillville, Iowa, directly after he finished his famous *American String Quartet*, and it reflects similar sensibilities in balancing American inspirations with Czech folk music.

Participants: Alina Kobialka and Abigail Fayette, *violin*; Tanner Menees and Kim Kashkashian, *viola*; Christine J. Lee, *cello*