

Giovanni Gabrieli
 b. 1553-6; Venice
 d. August 21, 1612; Venice

Selection from the “*Sacrae symphoniae*” (1597)

Located in the northeastern portion of Italy, Venice in the 16th century was second in importance only to Rome. Over a period of nearly 1,000 years, Venice had grown to enormous significance as the chief port for European trade with the East. Although Venice was declining as a commercial power during the 16th century, it was simultaneously enjoying tremendous cultural vitality; Titian, Bellini, Tintoretto and Gabrieli were all working in the Venice of the 1500's.

The center of the city's musical activity was the glorious 11th century cathedral of Saint Mark; an outstanding example of Byzantine architecture, the church was filled with the exotic gifts which Venetian merchants were required to bring back from their travels. Giovanni Gabrieli became the music director at St. Mark around 1586. In his quest for more glorious sounds, Gabrieli began to write music that utilized the organs and choir lofts that were located on both sides and in the rear of the cathedral. As he developed this antiphonal concept (*cori spezzati*), Gabrieli began to write for more than two simultaneous ensembles and gradually evolved from a combination of voices and instruments to completely instrumental ensembles. His first and most famous set of works was published in 1597 as the *Sacrae Symphoniae* (Sacred Symphonies).

The titles of the works, somewhat cryptic at first glance, are actually very informative. For example, a title might be *Canzon Septimi Octavi Toni a 12*; this indicates that the work is a *Canzon* (“canzona” or “song”), in the seventh mode (Mixolydian--all white notes G-G), written for twelve independent parts. Although these works encompass a rather wide formal range, they tend to have the widely separated choirs engage in a dialogue and then join together in a contrapuntal climax of resonance.

Gabriel Fauré
 b. May 12, 1845; Pamiers (Ariège)
 d. November 4, 1924; Passy

Requiem, Opus 48

Originally written in 1887, this music was first performed in its original scoring for chorus and organ in 1888 at Paris's Church of the Madeleine. Evolving over the years, this 39-minute work was ultimately published in 1900 for solo soprano and baritone, chorus and an orchestra consisting of two flutes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, two harps, organ and strings. It was last performed on this series in September of 2004, led by Bobby McFerrin.

A distinguished, sensitive musician, Fauré rose to the forefront of French music during an era of rapid artistic evolution. At the time Fauré was born, the youngest of six children of a school administrator, Berlioz was engaged in the composition of *Le damnation de Faust*. By the time of his death, Fauré was regarded as one of the most advanced French composers, yet Berg's *Wozzeck* had already been completed and Messiaen was writing his early works. At Fauré's funeral service—attended by the president of the Republic—the composer's most successful large-scale work, the *Requiem*, was performed. Devoid of the religious histrionics that so many other composers of the romantic era indulged, Fauré's *Requiem* offers a message of tranquil solace to the bereaved.

Fauré's musical gifts were recognized during his childhood; at the age of ten, he was sent to the Ecole Niedermeyer in Paris, for training as an organist and choirmaster. During his eleven years at the school, Fauré had the opportunity to study piano and composition with Saint-Saens, an experience that exposed the young musician to many of the new directions in the field of music. High-spirited in his youth, Fauré was involved in a few minor scandals while working at a

succession of church jobs. After serving in the Imperial Guard and getting married in 1883, his life took on a more settled quality. Fauré supported his family by working as the organist at the famed Church of the Madeline in Paris and by teaching both privately and at the Conservatoire.

It was long believed that Fauré composed his *Requiem* as a tribute to his father, who died in 1885. More recently, Jean-Michel Nectoux wrote: "The *Requiem* was not composed to the memory of a specific person but, in Fauré's words, 'for the pleasure of it'; it was long unknown that the work took over twenty years to assume its present form, the composition extending from 1877 to about 1890, and the orchestration being completed only in 1900." Throwing out a bit of a musical challenge, Nectoux continues: "A restoration of the version evolved between 1888 and 1892 for small orchestra (without violins and woodwind) would be feasible and interesting."

Looking at the score, it is possible to see how the work grew from its original form for chorus and organ to its present instrumentation. The emphasis is on darker string colors; violas and cellos are divided into two groups, the violins are only active as a brightening element in those sections utilizing celestial images.

Fauré's choice of text is also significant. Instead of a dramatic *Dies irae* ("Day of Wrath"), with stringent evocations of Judgment Day, Fauré stresses hope and pardon, employing the *Pie Jesu* and *Libera me*, before closing with the comforting vision of *In Paradisum*.

Fauré, who spent virtually his entire life immersed in religious music, wrote an article in 1922, entitled *What is Religious Music—Franck and Gounod*. In part, he wrote: "The music heard daily in churches often invites severe criticism. On the other hand, some Paris and provincial choirmasters distinguish themselves in the choice and execution of works truly worthy of their purpose. There is, however, no conclusive standard of excellence. Such and such a composition, nobly conceived and purely written, might seem over-adorned or wanting in religious character to some minds. What music is religious? What music is not? To try to resolve the question is quite hazardous, since no matter how deeply sincere a musician's religious feeling may be, it is through his personal taste that he expresses it and not according to rules one can fix. Every classification in this field of ideas has always seemed arbitrary to me. Can one maintain, for example, that among those religious compositions or Cesar Franck which reach the loftiest heights (up to the very quiver of angels' wings), there might not be a few which, because of their very smoothness, are not absolutely free of sensuality? On the other hand, doesn't that child voice which soars alone to sing *Gloria in excelsis Deo* in the *Messe Solennelle* of Gounod create an effect of exquisite purity? And because the text of the *Agnus Dei* inspired him to accents of ineffable tenderness, can one say that Gounod profaned the text? I cite these two musicians because the religious style of the one has so often been contrasted with the religious style of the other, and because I am trying to show that in the realm of truly musical and beautiful works, it is almost impossible to draw a line of demarcation between those which are religious and those that 'savor of heresy.'"

INTROIT AND KYRIE

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis. Te decet hymnus, Deus, in Sion, et tibi reddetur votum in Jerusalem. Exaudi orationem meam, ad te omnis caro veniet. Kyrie elision, Christe elision.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. You, O God, are praised in Zion, and unto You shall the vow be performed in Jerusalem. Hear my prayer, unto You shall all flesh come. Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy.

OFFERTORIUM

O Domine Jesu Christe, Rex gloriae, libera animas defunctorum de poenis inferni, et de profundo lacu. O Domine Jesu Christe, Rex gloriae, libera animas defunctorum de ore leonis, ne absorbeat

tartarus. O Domine Jesu Christe, Rex gloriae, ne cadant in obscurum. Hostias et preces tibi, Domine, laudis offerimus; tu sucipe pro animabus illis, quarum hodie memoriam facimus; fac eas. Domine, de morte transire ad vitam. Quam olim Abrahae promisisti, et semini ejus.

O Lord Jesus Christ, King of Glory, deliver the souls of the departed from the pains of hell, and from the lowest pit. O Lord Jesus Christ, King of Glory, deliver the souls of the departed from the mouth of the lion, that hell may not swallow them up. O Lord Jesus Christ, King of Glory, that they fall not into darkness. We offer to You, O Lord, sacrifices of praise; accept them for those souls whom we commemorate this day; make them, O Lord, to pass from death to life; as You promised to Abraham and his seed forever.

SANCTUS

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth! Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts! Heaven and earth are full of Your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.

PIE JESU

Pie Jesu Domine, dona eis requiem, dona eis sempiternam requiem.

Gentle Jesus, Lord and God, grant them rest, grant them your eternal rest.

AGNUS DEI

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi; dona eis requiem. Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine, cum sanctus tuus in aeternum, quia pius es. Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world, grant them rest. Let eternal light shine upon them, with Your saints in eternity, for You are gracious. Grant them eternal rest, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

LIBERA ME

Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna, in die illa tremenda, quando coeli movendi sunt et terra, dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem.

Tremens factus sum ego et timeo, dum discussio venerit atque ventura ira. Dies irae, dies illa, calamitatis et miseriae, dies illa, dies magna, et amara valde. Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Deliver me O Lord, from eternal death, in that dread day, when heaven and earth shall shake and You shall come to judge the world by fire.

I am trembling and full of fear at the judgment that shall come and at the coming of
Your wrath. Day of wrath, dread day of calamity and misery, great day of bitter sorrow.
Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

IN PARADISUM

In paradisum deducant angelis tuo adventu, suscipiant te martyres et perducant te in civitatem
sanctam Jerusalem. Chorus angelorum te suscipiant et cum Lazaro quondam paupere requiem
aeternam habeas.

In paradise be received of angel hosts, your coming attended by all the blessed martyr
throng, your path guided into the holy city Jerusalem. May the chorus of angels there receive
you, and with Lazarus, once a beggar, gain eternal rest.

Edward Elgar

b. June 2, 1857; Broadheath

d. February 23, 1934; Worcester

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in B minor, Opus 61

Written between 1907 and 1910, this concerto was premiered in London by Fritz Kreisler with Elgar leading the Philharmonic Society on November 10, 1910. In this 45-minute work, the soloist is accompanied by pairs of flutes, oboes and clarinets, three bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani and strings. Hilary Hahn was the soloist for the last series presentations of this music; Andreas Delfs led the orchestra in May of 2001.

A product of the years between his First and Second Symphonies, Elgar began preliminary work on his Violin Concerto during the summer of 1907, took it up again in August of 1909 and completed it during the summer of the following year. Considered to be among the composer's finest works, the concerto is a highly personal and intensely lyric reflection of Elgar's complex personality. The English composer wrote the work in response to Fritz Kreisler's enthusiastic request. The Austrian violinist/composer had become acquainted with *The Dream of Gerontius* in 1904 and had finally gained some sort of verbal commitment from Elgar at a meeting of the two musicians in 1906.

Kreisler's frustration with the slow progress of the work was voiced in an interview published by *Musical America* in November of 1909: "Like every concert violinist, I should like to get some new concertos. But where are they? Sir Edward Elgar promised me a concerto three years ago. When he writes one it will be a labor of love rather than profit. But I can't get the first note out of him." Of course, by the time that this statement was published, Elgar had already commenced work on the concerto.

Although the violin was Elgar's instrument, he consulted with W.H. Reed, a violinist of the London Symphony Orchestra, during the creation of the work. Reed also played a private premiere of the work; during the summer of 1910, Elgar joined him in a piano reduction version of the concerto. In his biography of the composer, Reed recalled his first visit as a "unique experience. There was the composer, striding about, arranging scraps of manuscript in different parts of the room, pinning them to the backs of chairs and placing them on the mantelpiece with photograph frames to hold them in position. It was wonderful to note the speed at which he scribbled out another passage or made an alternation or scrapped a sketch altogether as being redundant."

Elgar's letters during this period alternate between optimism and depression; at last, on June 29th (1910), he wrote to Sir Frank Schuster: "This Concerto is *full* of romantic feeling—I should have been a philanthropist if I had been a rich man—I know the feeling is human & right—vainglory!"

Years later, Kreisler recounted his first experience with the concerto: "I recall the rapture which I felt, before the concert, when I first played the last movement of the great concerto. I was in the composer's study at the time. Scattered around on the floor were the sheets of his manuscript where he had dropped them to dry just as they came from his pen. We gathered them together and numbered them hurriedly. I set them, still barely dry, upon the music stand, picked up my violin, and played.

"As I played, I knew that Elgar had given the world a work that was full of great music and of inspired passages. When I had finished that last movement, I turned to him and, gripping his hands, thanked him for permitting me to introduce his concerto to the world."

With Elgar on the podium, Kreisler performed the premiere of the concerto with the Philharmonic Society in London on November 10, 1910. The newspapers called it a "scene of unprecedented enthusiasm."

In addition to the score's dedication to Kreisler, Elgar inscribed an enigmatic Spanish motto from Le Sage's *Gil Blas*: "Aqui esta encerrade el alma de....." Writing to his friend Nicholas Kilburn, the composer teased: "Here, or more emphatically *in here* is enshrined or simply enclosed --buried is perhaps too definite—*the soul of.....?* The final 'de' leaves it indefinite as to sex or rather gender. Now guess." There have been many guesses, but the most likely candidate is Alice Stuart-Wortley, daughter of the painter Sir John Millais. They enjoyed a warm, lively, and allegedly platonic relationship. Perhaps the most convincing evidence that the five dots stood for her name was that Elgar nicknamed her "Windflower," and also in several letters referred to the "windflower themes" of his concerto.

In 1932, Elgar conducted a recording of this concerto with the young prodigy Yehudi Menuhin; Menuhin continued to champion the work throughout his illustrious career. Alluding to that historic recording in her comments on the concerto, Diana McVeagh called it "...expertly composed for Elgar's own instrument, [it] is rare in combining bravura with such a confidential manner (Berg's concerto comes near it). The solo personality is ardent and sweet, made the more affecting by the rubato common to all Elgar's music, but most persuasive here where a single figure sways a crowd. This rubato, partly deduced from his liberal expression marks, is held to be a secret of Elgar's performing style; played without it, or with too much, his music lacks flow. His own recorded performances are never indulgent; he pounces on to the crux of a phrase and draws a keen, supple line. The opening of the Violin Concerto is a group subject of four shortish phrases, an example of his composing method sometimes criticized as short-winded; but Elgar's own performance (or indeed a fine one by any conductor and soloist) sweeps them into a single paragraph."