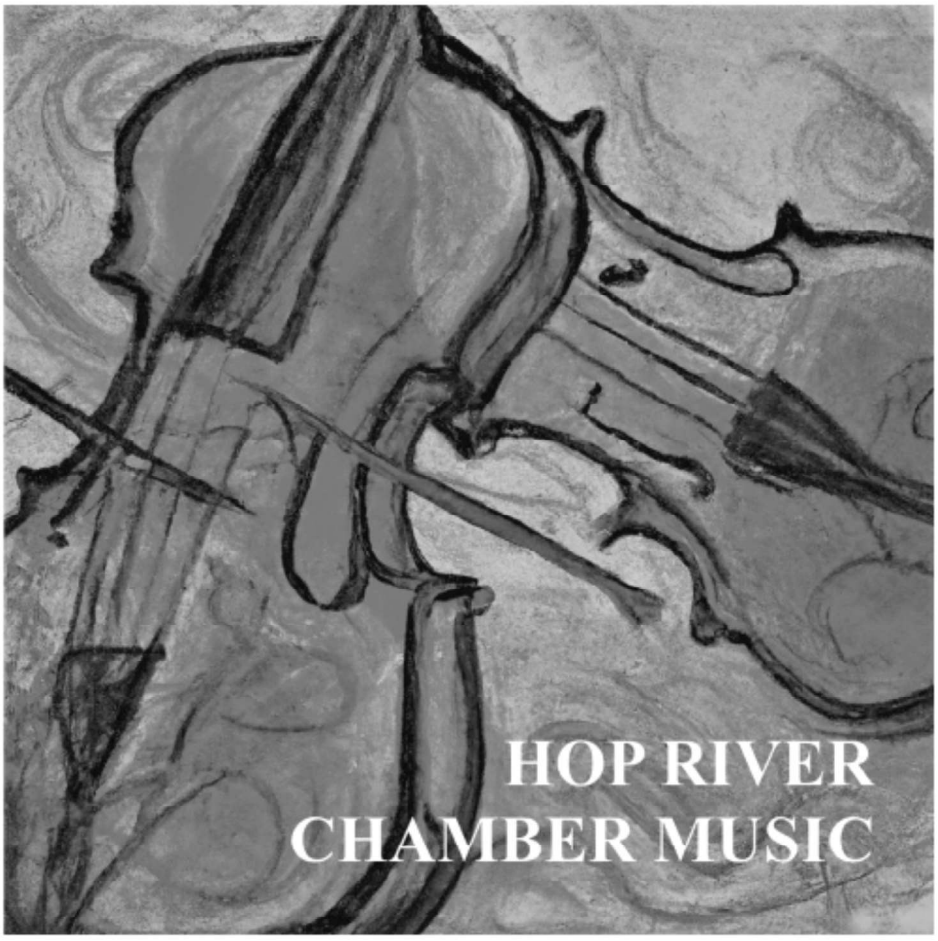
47th Season

HOP RIVER

CHAMBER MUSIC SERIES

July 10, 17, & 24, 2025



von der Mehden Recital Hall
UConn Fine Arts Complex
Storrs, Connecticut
Suggested donation $20

Greetings, Friends!

Here we are in the year 2025. We're also at year 47 for the existence of Hop River Chamber Music. I'm glad to report that we are returning to von der Mehden Recital Hall after the installation of a new roof moved us to another venue last year. Welcome to new members of our audiences and welcome back to all others. We hope you will enjoy hearing the music of Barber, Beethoven, Bolcom, Brahms, Faure, Gade, Mendelssohn, Sibelius and Wolf.

Recordings now enable us to hear a vast amount of music, far beyond the performances transmitted by telephone that Edward Bellamy imagined in his 1888 novel, *Looking Backward: 2000 to 1887*. We can listen to music written centuries ago and to synthesized music that cannot be performed. What recordings cannot provide is the immediacy of being in the audience at a live performance. A recording studio and professional string quartet can produce a note-perfect recording of Mendelssohn's octet for double string quartet, but not a recording of its first performance or the experience of hearing a live performance in that tradition. The first performance of that octet by Hop River Chamber Music may be heard live on July 24.

As you await these performances, here are some musings on music:

> Music is the universal language of mankind. *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*
>
> If you want to make beautiful music, you must play the black and white notes together. *Richard M. Nixon*
>
> When words fail, music speaks. *Hans Christian Andersen*
>
> Music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy. *Ludwig van Beethoven*
>
> Music is the language of the spirit. It opens the secret of life-bringing peace, abolishing strife. *Kahlil Gibran*
>
> The aim and final end of all music should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul. *J. S. Bach*
>
> Music is the heart of life. *Franz Liszt*
>
> Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent. *Victor Hugo*

I am grateful to each Board member, to our intern and to the musicians who give generously of their time and talents in order to provide outstanding concerts each year. Thank you, classical music lovers, for your interest, your support and your attendance at performances of the Hop River Chamber Music concerts.

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2025 Program Advertisers

July 10, 2025

7:30 P.M.

Ludwig van Beethoven — *Piano trio in c*, op. 1, no. 3

I. Allegro con brio
II. Andante cantabile con Variazioni
III. Menuetto. Quasi allegro
IV. Finale. Prestissimo

Barbara Vaughan, violin
Fran Bard, cello
Andrew King, piano

William Bolcom — *Three rags for string quartet*

Poltergeist (1971)
Graceful ghost (1970)
Incineratorag (1967)

Mary Ellen Briga, violin
Barbara Vaughan, violin
Laurel Thurman, viola
Fran Bard, cello

INTERMISSION

Johannes Brahms — *Piano quintet in f*, op. 34

I. Allegro non troppo
II. Andante, un poco Adagio
III. Scherzo
IV. Finale

Barbara Vaughan, violin
Mary Ellen Briga, violin
Laurel Thurman, viola
Fran Bard, cello
Andrew King, piano

PROGRAM NOTES

Piano trio in c, op. 1, no. 3 Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Ludwig van Bethoven was born in Bonn, a small city on the Rhine River about 25 km south of Cologne, then capital of the Archbishopric of Cologne, an ecclesiastical state of the Holy Roman Empire. Ludwig's father Johann, a singer, had a position in the service of his Archbishop, just as Wolfgang Mozart's father Leopold, a violinist, had served the Archbishop of Salzburg (and in 1770 still did). Both fathers gave their sons their first lessons in music, but Wolfgang was much luckier: his didn't come with beatings for transgressions like wasting time improvising at the keyboard. A cruel and rigid taskmaster, Johann may have thought that in Ludwig, he might have a *Wunderkind* like Wolfgang. If so, his attempt to showcase Ludwig's talent with a recital in Cologne at age 7 appears to have generated no interest at all. Fortunately, other court musicians were available to instruct Ludwig in violin, viola, and—from about age 10–composition and organ.

By the end of 1790, when Joseph Haydn stopped in Bonn on his journey down the Rhine to England, Ludwig was positioned for a career as a court musician. As Court Organist, he had displaced his father in service to the Archbishop: Johann's problems with alcohol—probably exacerbated by the death in 1787 of his wife, Ludwig's mother, worn out by producing seven children, four of whom died in infancy—rendered him unfit. When the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II died in February 1790, Ludwig was commissioned to compose a memorial cantata, which he appears to have done by the end of March. Perhaps because it called for forces not easily assembled in Bonn, this 40 minute work would not be performed anywhere until 1884. However, Haydn probably saw the score during his visit, as reported by a friend of Ludwig's: " On this occasion, Beethoven showed him a cantata, which Haydn was particularly impressed by, and which made him urge Beethoven to embark on further studies." {In *Beethoven: the universal composer*, Edmund Morris suggests that it isn't preposterous to wonder if a look at Ludwig's *Cantata on the death of Emperor Joseph II* may have given Hayden ideas that shaped his oratorio *The Creation* (1798).}

Returning to Vienna, Haydn again stopped in Bonn in July 1792. Inquiries about study with him were probably made then on Ludwig's behalf by Count Ferdinand Waldstein (dedicatee of Beethoven's 1804 *Piano sonata no. 21 in C*, op. 53), who pressed the Archbishop to grant him a leave of absence. Ludwig left Bonn for Vienna in November 1792, never to return. Lessons in counterpoint with Haydn proved disappointing—Ludwig would later claim to have learned nothing from Haydn, which may have been true of Haydn-as-teacher, but certainly not of Haydn-as-composer: he put a lot of time into studying Haydn's scores. Association with Haydn and letters of introduction from Waldstein opened the doors of Viennese salons to him, where he soon

made a name for himself as a piano virtuoso and improviser.

At the end of 1793, the Archbishop turned down a request to continue supporting Ludwig's studies. Rather than returning to Bonn, Ludwig turned to wealthy supporters. In March 1795, he relied on his reputation to offer three piano trios comprising op. 1 by subscription, gambling that he could recover the substantial cost of the plates and then some. His bet paid off: he made enough money to live for a year in pricey Vienna. The third of these trios, in the dark key of c-minor, sounds the most like Beethoven, though it has a surprise ending that recalls works by Haydn and Mozart.

Three rags for string quartet William Bolcom (b. 1938)

Born in Seattle, William Bolcom studied music at the University of Washington (B.A., 1958), Stanford University (D.M.A., 1964), and with French composers Darius Milhaud and Olivier Messiaen. From 1973 to 2008, he taught composition at The University of Michigan's School of Music, advising would-be composers: "First, get your skills (counterpoint, harmony) and study the music of the last millenium so that you can write fluently. Second, . . . [i]f you follow your interests, your style will find you."

Initially, he composed music in regimented, atonal styles deriving from the 12-tone system of Arnold Schönberg, not on its face a very promising set of constraints for producing engaging music (as has proved to be the case). Later, he came to think that contemporary classical composers would be better nourished if they took popular music and folk traditions more seriously. Bolcom now styles himself "an unrepentent eclectic," a stance embodied in his "full-evening setting" of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1789–94) for chorus, orchestra, ensembles and vocalists, "in which whatever musical style suggested to me in each particular poem dictated the resulting song's setting-styles . . . . I just went with where the poem took me, sometimes into areas I'd never guessed (country & western for ' The Shepherd' for example, which I fought with at first until I realized it wouldn't go away)."

Composers he particularly admires include Scott Joplin (c.1876–1917), known for piano rags and two operas (one now lost), and the American original, Charles Ives (1874–1954), who worked popular tunes and hymns into his compositions. In a 2021 interview, Bolcom explains: "I got into ragtime because of Joplin. He brought about a marriage of African-American and European elements with perfect taste and created a fine, unified music."

Bolcom has composed some 27 piano rags, three of which will be heard today in his arrangements for string quartet (1989). "Incineratorag" is most like a rag by Joplin, but, like the others, is not designed to pass for one. The connection is more akin to Bolcom's re-imagination of older music in *Fantôme de Clavecin* (Ghost of the harpsichord): "a creditable suggestion of what [Francoise] Couperin might sound like had he been born in the late 20th or early 21st century," according to Larry Palmer in *The Diapason*). "Poltergeist"

may be named for a stop-action sequence at the end. The viola is prominent in the elegaic "Graceful Ghost," written in memory of his father, a fine dancer.

Piano quintet in f, op. 34 Johannes Brahms (1833–97)

This work is the second of a trio of great 19th century Romantic works for string quartet and piano, the others being Robert Schumann's *Piano quintet in E♭* (1842) and Antonín Dvořák's *Piano quintet in A* (1887). Schumann produced his in a matter of days, Dvořák his in two months, Brahms his over the course of two years. It evolved from a 2-cello string quintet (September 1862) through an intermediate form—a sonata for two pianos (April 1864)—to the piano quintet (October 1864) we hear today.

Brahms sent copies of the string quintet to his good friends, pianist Clara Schumann and violinist Joseph Joachim, for comment. Clara was enthusiastic ("What an adagio! How rapturously it sings and rings from beginning to end!"), Joseph not so much. In May 1863 he reported to Clara, " ... I was able to have his quintet played for him. It is a great pity that the general effect of this piece, in spite of so much that is remarkable in it, should be so unsatisfactory, and I was glad that Johannes, on hearing it himself, wished to alter it." Instead, Brahms transcribed the work for two pianos (*Sonata in f for two pianos*, published as op. 34a in 1871). This time Clara was dissatisfied, writing to him in July 1864, " ... it is a work so full of ideas that it requires an orchestra for its interpretation. These ideas are for the most part lost on the piano .... So please remodel it once more!" Brahms didn't go for an orchestration (though the splendid one Arnold Schönberg did of Brahms' *Piano quartet in g*, op. 25, in 1937 suggests that Clara may have been onto something). Instead—at the suggestion of conductor Hermann Levi, with whom Clara had played through the 2-piano version—he recast the work as a piano quintet. It was successfully premiered in Paris in 1868.

Brahms destroyed his original string quintet, so it's hard to know exactly what its deficiences might have been. At least two attempts have been made to reconstruct it from the piano quintet. At www.karttunen.org, cellist Anssi Karttunen, who carried out one of them, observes that "there are many passages that feel very natural with the string quintet, the luxurious sound of the trio of the third movement or the quiet beauty of the opening of the last movement." He wonders if it wasn't the performance by Joachim's quartet—after just two rehearsals—rather than Brahms' string writing that was wanting, noting that "all the parts are quite difficult" and "the key of f-minor alone is very difficult with no piano to provide harmonic stability." There are too many ways to 'reverse engineer' the piano quintet into a string quintet, so we'll never know. But we can certainly agree with Karttunen that "we are lucky that [Brahms] didn't do away with the piece completely [as] he did with so many early string quartets."

Notes by S. K. Lehmann

July 17, 2025

7:30 P.M.

Samuel Barber — *Summer music*

Kim Collins, flute
Erik Andrusyak, oboe
Chris Howard, clarinet
Sean Maree, bassoon
John Michael Flavetta, French horn

Francis Poulenc — *Sextet for piano and winds*

Allegro vivace
Divertissement: Andantino
Finale: Prestissimo

Kim Collins, flute
Erik Andrusyak, oboe
Chris Howard, clarinet
Sean Maree, bassoon
John Michael Flavetta, French horn
Gary Chapman, piano

INTERMISSION

Gabriel Fauré — *Piano quartet no. 1 in c*, op. 15

I. Allegro molto moderato
II. Scherzo: Allegro vivo
III. Adagio
IV. Allegro molto

Barbara Vaughan, violin
Lauel Thurman, viola
Fran Bard, cello
Andrew King, piano

PROGRAM NOTES

Summer music Samuel Barber (1910–81)

> . . . I don't surround myself with other composers . . . . Most composers bore me, because most composers are boring. It seems to me the most practical thing is simply to write your music the way you want to write it. Then you go out and find the interpreters who will give it voice. The point is, composers have never helped me. Performers have *always* helped me. Samuel Barber, 1971

Born in West Chester (PA), Samuel Barber was drawn to music at an early age: he began to play piano at age 6 and to compose a year later. His parents were not overly impressed by his precosity and would have preferred that he go outside and play with other kids. In a note written at about age 8 to his mother, Barber protests, "I was not meant to be an athelet [sic] I was meant to be a composer . . . ." With the support and encouragement of his aunt, he prevailed and entered the Curtis Institute with its first class in 1924, studying piano, composition and voice there until 1933. Five years later, his *Essay for orchestra* (op. 12, 1937) and the *Adagio for strings* from his *String quartet* (op. 11, 1936) were heard in a nationally broadcast concert by the NBC Symphony under Arturo Toscanini. From then on, he was the rare American composer who could make a living from commissions.

Summer music evolved from an unusual 1953 commission by the Chamber Music Society of Detroit: to commemorate its 10th anniversary in 1954, the Sociey wanted a septet for three woodwinds, three strings and piano to be played by principals of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra (DSO). Lacking financial resources to pay Barber his usual fee, it negotiated an agreement with him to fund the commission with donations of at least $2,000 raised by the Society. According to Barber, "The idea was that if this caught on, music societies around the country would take up similar collections and use the funds to commission young local composers who needed experience and exposure." (Though not consciously inspired by this example, Hop River Chamber Music used a similar model to commission *New England Fall* from Neely Bruce at Wesleyan University, for performance as a companion piece to Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring* in 2018.)

The Society had to wait several years to hear what Barber composed for it—a piece that did not call for the exotic septet of instruments the Society had proposed. In summer 1954, having no experience composing chamber music for winds and hearing the New York Woodwind Quintet (NYWQ) play a concert in Blue Hill (ME), he had prevailed upon this ensemble to help him with the Society's commission. He was able to sit in on the NYWQ's rehearsals for insight into the capabilities and limitations of wind instruments, and to submit sections of what would eventually become *Summer music* for the ensemble

to try out. The premiere performance in spring 1956 was given in Detroit by the DSO's principal woodwinds, but the version heard today is the product of further collaboration between Barber and the NYWQ. The score is marked "Slow and indolent", quarter note = 44. According to Barber, "it's supposed to be *evocative* of summer—summer meaning indolent, not killing mosquitoes."

Sextet for piano and winds, FP 100 Francis Poulenc (1899–1963)

Among the few composers with whom Samuel Barber enjoyed spending time was Francis Poulenc, whom he consulted in 1950 about settings of poems in French by Rainer Maria Rilke: "Francis and I were very friendly—in fact, I've rarely been that close to another composer. I dedicated *Mélodies passagères* [the cycle in which the settings appear] to him, and he dedicated to me his 'Capriccio d'après *Le Bal Masque*' for two pianos."

Born into a well-to-do Parisian family, Francis Poulenc was introduced to piano at age 5 by his mother, an amateur pianist. Playing the piano quickly became his passion: "When I recall my childhood I see myself always sitting at a piano." Had she run the house, Francis would have studied at the Paris Conservatoire. As it was, he acceded to his father's wish that he get a classical education, and looked elsewhere for musical nourishment. Private study (1914–17) with virtuoso pianist Ricardo Viñes was the impetus for a life in music as a pianist and composer, as he would later attest: "It is to Viñes that I owe my fledgling efforts in music and everything I know about the piano."

Until studying composition with Charles Koechlin in the early 1920s, he was largely self-taught as a composer. Nonetheless, *Rapsodie nègre* for baritone and chamber ensemble (1917) so impressed Stravinsky that he arranged for its publication. More recognition came in 1920, when Poulenc was included in a group of young French composers united in their admiration for the music of Erik Satie and announced to the musical world as "Les six Français," and in 1924 with the great success of his ballet for Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russe, *Les biches* (literally 'The does', figuratively 'The flirts'), of which Poulenc remarked that "as in certain paintings by Watteau, nothing is actually seen but the worst can be imagined."

By about the time he graduated from high school (1917), both his parents had died. The substantial estate Poulenc and his older sister inherited—his father had been one of the brothers from whom the chemical manufacturer Poulenc Fréres took its name—enabled him to do as he wished without ever having to worry about making a living. In 1928 he bought a beautiful 18th century house in the Loire valley, so that he might compose without the distractions of Paris, where he kept a small apartment and maintained a busy social life whenever he was in town.

Poulenc's chamber music consists largely of pieces he would perform with other musicians, particularly songs for voice and piano, many of them written for baritone Pierre Bernac with whom Poulenc toured extensively as a duo.

The sextet for piano and wind quintet on today's program is among a much smaller number of instrumental chamber works, in which winds are prominent. In some form, it was performed in June 1931 at a concert in Paris financed by Poulenc. Substantially revised by 1939, the version heard today was first performed at the end of 1940 by Poulenc with the Quintette à vent de Paris.

Piano quartet no. 1 in c, op. 15 Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)

Gabriel Fauré was born in Pamiers, south of Toulouse, in the *département* of Ariège, up against the Pyrenees in southern France. The youngest of six children, he was baby-farmed out until age four, when his father was appointed director of the Montgauzy Teachers' College in Foix. Gabriel's introduction to music seems to have been amusing himself by playing a harmonium in a chapel at the school. Musically gifted, he was—perhaps with some rudimentary keyboard instruction from College students—sufficiently accomplished by age 8 to impress the parliamentary deputy for Ariège, who persuaded his father to enroll him in Louis Niedermeyer's School of Religious and Classical Music in Paris (three days travel from Foix).

At École Niedermeyer, rations were meagre and discipline tough, but the opportunity to make music and the interest that Niedermeyer himself and others took in him made up for it: his piano teacher, Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921), became a life-long friend, opening many doors for him. Gabriel spent eleven years at the school, graduating as Maître de Chapelle (choirmaster) in 1865. Thereafter, he served as organist or choirmaster in Rennes and for various churches in Paris, as professor of composition at the Paris Conservatoire from 1896, and as its director (1905–20).

Fauré was a fine pianist, and most of his compositions call for piano—alone, with voice, or in small ensembles. The piano quartet on today's program is the first of two he composed. Begun in 1876, following favorable reception of his *Sonata for violin and piano in A*, op. 13, it was not completed until 1883. A version performed in 1880 with other musicians of the Société nationale de musique, formed by Saint-Saëns to promote French music, was well-received. But concerns about the finale led Fauré to re-write this movement from scratch, and the revised version was finally heard in 1884. It's doubtful that these performances did justice to Fauré's intentions. A friend remembered in 1919:

> Fauré told me how carelessly and casually the music had been played by artists who were then fashionable. And how, when summoned to a rehearsal on the eve of the first perforance, he had dared to make some timid observations about tempi and had asked them to put in some dynamic nuances. The 'cellist of the quartet immediately interrupted him: 'My dear fellow, we're in a hurry, it's all we can do to get the notes right: we haven't got time to worry about nuances.'

Notes by S. K. Lehmann

July 24, 2025

7:30 P.M.

Niels Gade — *String quartet no. 1 in D*, op. 63

I. Allegro moderato
II. Allegro vivace
III. Andante poco lento
IV. Allegro con brio

Mary Ellen Briga, violin
Lu Sun Friedman, violin
Arthur Masi, viola
Jacob Nordlinger, cello

Jean Sibelius & Hugo Wolf — Songs

Sibelius	*Illalle*, op. 17, no. 6
Sibelius	*Flickan kom ifrån sin älsklings möte*, op. 37, no. 5
Sibelius	*Var det en dröm?* op. 37, no. 4
Wolf	*Das verlassene Mägdlein*, Mörike-Lieder, no. 7
Wolf	*Alle gingen, Herz, zu Ruh*, Spanische-Liederbuch, no. 31
Wolf	*Heut' Nacht erhob ich mich um Mitternacht*, Italienische-Liederbuch, no. 41
Sibelius	*Fågellek*, op. 17, no. 3
Sibelius	*Vilse*, op. 17, no. 4

Julie Reumert, soprano
Andrew King, piano

{Song texts and translations will be available at the concert}

INTERMISSION

Felix Mendelssohn — *String octet in E♭*, op. 20

I. Allegro moderato con fuoco
II. Andante
III. Scherzo
IV. Presto

Lu Sun Friedman, violin
Mary Ellen Briga, violin
Martha Kayser, violin
Barbara Vaughan, violin
Arthur Masi, viola
Laurel Thurman, viola
Tom Hudson, cello
Jacob Nordlinger, cello

PROGRAM NOTES

String quartet no. 1 in D, op. 63 Niels Gade (1817–90)

Felix Mendelssohn, then conductor of the Leipzing Gewandhaus Orchestra, probably knew more about Niels Gade than most people in this audience do now, when he wrote to his sister Fanny Hensel on 13 January 1843:

> Yesterday we read through a new symphony by a Dane of the name of Gade, and we are to perform it in the course of the ensuing month; it has given me more pleasure than any work I have seen for a long time. He has great and superior talents, and I wish you could hear this most original, most earnest, and sweet-sounding Danish symphony. I am writing him a few lines to-day, though I know nothing more of him than that he lives in Copenhagen, and is twenty-six years of age, but I must thank him for the delight he has caused me; for there can scarcely be a greater than to hear fine music; admiration increasing at every bar, and a feeling of congeniality; would that it came less seldom!

Gade had sent him a score and parts for a symphony in c-minor, which the orchestra played six weeks later to an enthusiastic audience, as Mendelssohn reported to Gade: "Your C minor symphony was performed for the first time yesterday at our eighteenth subscription concert here, to the lively and unalloyed delight of the whole public, who broke out into the loudest applause at the close of each of the four movements."

Born in Copenhagen, where his father made musical instruments, Gade had more interest in playing violin and other instruments than in putting them together. Lacking formal musical training until age 15, he was evidently a quick study. Ten years later he was playing violin in the Royal Danish Orchestra, which gave the first performance of his concert overture *Efterklange af Ossian* (Echoes of Ossian, op. 1) in 1841. Acclaim for his symphony and Mendelssohn's support opened doors for Gade in Leipzig. From 1843 to 1848 (when war between Prussia and Denmark sent him home to Copenhagen), he taught at its conservatory; conducted its orchestra, first as Mendelssohn's assistant and then as conductor after the latter's untimely death in 1847; and composed 3 more symphonies.

For the rest of his life, nearly twice as long as Mendelssohn's, Gade was a large presence in Danish music: composer, conductor and performer (violin, piano and organ); tireless promoter of Danish music as director of the Copenhagen Musikforeningen (Music Society); co-founder (1866), director and teacher at the Royal Danish Conservatory. A good deal of his music is now accessible in recordings. The Hartford Symphony is unlikely to program the *Symphony no. 1 in c* (op. 5) or his dark cantata *Elverskud* (The elf-king's daughter, op. 30) anytime soon (if ever), but you can hear them on YouTube.

Pianists will find early works that charmed Robert Schumann in *Niels Wilhelm Gade: Selected piano pieces* (Henle).

Gade composed three string quartets—in F-minor (1851), E-minor (1877–89), and D-major (1887–89)—but only the last of these was published in his lifetime. Originally, it had a different first movement, which some sources claim was transposed to E-minor to replace the original first movement of the E-minor quartet. In February 1890, less than a year beore his death, Gade himself played violin in a private performance for Queen Louise.

Selected Songs Hugo Wolf (1860–1903) & Jean Silbelius (1865–1957)

Both Hugo Wolf and Jean Sibelius composed numerous songs for voice and piano—over 70 from Sibelius, about four times as many from Wolf. The title of Woody Allen's 1975 film *Love and death* (though not the film itself) will give you a general idea of what those on this program are about.

Born south of Graz, Austria, in what is now Slovenia, Hugo Wolf received instruction in violin and piano from his father, who operated a leather business that he hoped to pass on to his son. However, only music interested Hugo, and after failing in a series of secondary schools, he was finally sent to Vienna in 1875 to study at the Conservatory.

Assisted by bad judgment, Hugo had more than his share of bad luck. Dismissed from the Conservatory two years later for a threatening letter to its director to which someone else had signed Hugo's name, he was temperamentally unsuited to hold a job teaching music, or conducting, or (in truth) doing anything but composing songs, while loyal and indulgent friends paid the bills. Syphilis contracted in 1878 probably contributed to instability long before it led to insanity and death. A stint (1884–87) as a music critic championing Richard Wagner and Anton Bruckner over Johannes Brahms made him numerous enemies in Vienna; in consequence, he had difficulty getting his works heard or published. By the time his father died in 1887, he'd written Hugo off as a n'er-do-well, which he very nearly was. Only truly amazing bursts of creativity over the next ten years brought him fame, largely posthumous, as the greatest composer of songs since Franz Schubert.

Wolf's large output of songs is organized into songbooks (*Liederbücher*) according to the source of the text. The *Mörike Lieder* comprise 53 songs on poems by Eduard Mörike (1804–75). German texts by Eduard Giebel and Paul Heyse from Spanish and Italian sources are used in the 44 and 46 songs of the *Spanische-Liederbuch* and the *Italienische-Liederbuch*.

Revered in Finland for his music and its role in promoting Finnish national identity, Jean Sibelius was born in Hameenlinna, about 100 km north of Helsinki, where his father Christian was a military doctor. (Christened 'Johan' in memory of his father's brother, he later adopted the French 'Jean' after seeing it on his uncle's old name cards.) At this time, Finland was a duchy

of Russia, wrested from Sweden in 1819. It would not achieve independence until mid-1918, toward the end of World War I, when right-wing nationalists and German forces prevailed in an (un)civil war against left-wing nationalists and their Russian allies after the October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

When Christian died of typhus 30 months later, Jean was raised by his mother (and hers), with assistance from his uncle Pehr, who encouraged his early interest in piano and gave him a violin at age 10. In 1881 at age 15 he started violin lessons with dreams of becoming a virtuoso, dreams he regretfully put aside ten years later, realizing that he'd started too late; instead, he challenged would-be virtuosos with his difficult *Violin concerto in d* (1905).

After study at the Helsinki Music Institute (1885–89), Sibelius gained national prominence with his choral symphony *Kullervo* (1892), inspired by an epic poem *Kalevala* assembled in 1835 by Elias Lönnrot from Finnish folk poetry, songs, and myths he'd collected. By June 1914, when he conducted the first performance of his symphonic poem *Oceanides* at the Norfolk Music Festival in Connecticut, Sibelius had an international reputation as a composer of symphonic music, ranging from the nationalistic *Finlandia* (1899) to the austere *Symphony no. 4 in a* (1911). Among other works, he would go on to complete three more symphonies, but no music of any kind after 1929.

The Sibelius songs on this program were composed between 1891 and 1902. 'Illalle' is the only one with a Finnish text; the others employ texts from poets writing in Sibelius' native language, Swedish.

String octet in E♭, op. 20 — Felix Mendelssohn (1809–47)

Born in Hamburg, then part of the Confederation of the Rhine, Felix Mendelssohn grew up in Prussian Berlin, where his father relocated the family banking business in 1811. His musical gifts, like those of his equally precocious older sister Fanny, were apparent very early. Their development in both children was encouraged by their parents, who provided the best education money could buy and instilled in each a strong work ethic.

In 1821–23, Felix composed a series of ever more accomplished string symphonies. Even so, the maturity of this octet for strings (completed 15 October 1825) is astonishing. In the score published as op. 20 (1832), Felix specifies "this Octet must be played by all the instruments in symphonic orchestral style. Pianos and fortes must be strictly observed and more strongly emphasized than is usual for pieces of this character." Concerning the scherzo, Fanny recollected that Felix had envisioned "the whole piece . . . to be played staccato and pianissimo . . . the trills passing away with the quickness of lightning" so that "one feels so near to the world of spirits, carried away in the air . . . and at the end . . . all has vanished," a description that prefigures the sonic world of his equally astonishing concert overture from 1826, *Ein Sommernachtstraum* (A summer night's dream, op. 21), inspired by Shakespeare's play *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* (1595). Notes by S. K. Lehmann