



Amy Marcy Cheney Beach (1867-1944)
Romance, Op. 23 (1893)

As a virtuosic pianist and a member of the Second New England School—alongside composers George Whitefield Chadwick, Edward MacDowell and others—American composer Amy Beach holds a unique place in history. In a time when composers were expected to be white, male, and European-trained, Beach's productivity, ambition, self-awareness, and deft approach to large-scale works set her apart as she created her own path to professional success.

Beach's *Romance* was written for another pioneering female musician, violinist Maud Powell, who premiered violin concertos by Tchaikovsky, Sibelius and Coleridge-Taylor in the United States. The premiere of this work was given at the 1893 Women's Musical Congress by Powell with the composer at the piano. The audience was so taken by it, they immediately demanded that they play it in full again.

The piece begins with a gentle, expressive melody that floats over a lush piano accompaniment. The themes build and develop, revealing a sense of yearning and intimacy. Rippling chords and rich, chromatic harmonies create an intense atmosphere of Romantic sensibility.



Eleanor Alberga (b. 1949)
No-Man's-Land Lullaby (1996)

Born and raised in Kingston, Jamaica, Eleanor Alberga is a highly regarded British composer whose works are noted for their emotional impact, depth of craft, and brilliant coloring and orchestration. Alberga was awarded an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours 2021 for services to British Music, and together with her husband, violinist

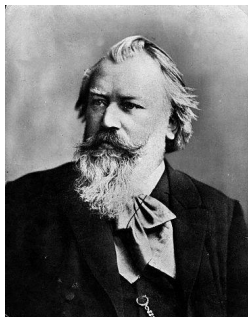
Thomas Bowes, founded and runs Arcadia, a chamber music festival in the English countryside where they live.

Setting about writing a new work for violin and piano in the summer of 1996, I had planned a somewhat lightweight and predominately upbeat piece. However, I was to receive visitations which ensured that the piece which emerged as *No-man's-land Lullaby* has neither of these qualities. Indeed, for me the work became a kind of acknowledgement of my European heritage and a realization that two World Wars are part of my history also.

Visiting parts of central Europe over that summer of 1996, I was struck by the almost unreal beauty of the landscapes; yet, I received a heavy sadness in the atmosphere that took me back to the events of half a century ago, some of which had been played out against this very scenery. At the same time I was visited by a melody. It arrived unbidden and would not leave me alone. It seemed, however, to offer comfort.

It was the imagery of the First World War that finally brought these things together, especially the image of men dying slowly and uncomforted in a place called No-man's-land. I am especially indebted to Paul Fussell's book *The Great War and Modern Memory* for laying out so clearly the life of soldiers in the trenches. The piece is cast in three sections and is entirely based on the melody that emerges most identifiably towards the end.

— Eleanor Alberga



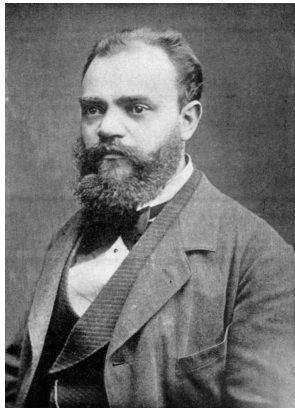
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
Clarinet (Viola) Trio, Op. 114 (1891)

Around 1890, a 57-year-old Brahms gave indications that he would retire as a composer. With an unquestionably illustrious career and a solid canon of masterworks behind him, Brahms seemed to be finished. He remarked, "I have worked enough; now let the young folks take over." Early in 1891, however, Brahms became intoxicated by the clarinet playing of Richard Mühlfeld and was inspired by this fresh muse to compose once again.

Between 1891 and 1894, Brahms composed a clutch of four magical chamber works featuring the clarinet: a trio, a quintet and two sonatas.

Brahms intended this trio as dual purpose from the outset, indicating viola as a substitution for clarinet on the title page of the published score.

Despite a possible expectation of shorter or lighter that "trio" might suggest, this is a full-length Classical-Romantic epic with a wealth of themes, moods, developments and dramatic narratives, and texture balanced among the three instruments. In the four-movement plan, the outer two (first and last) project a dark and melancholic mood from the lonely cello solo in the beginning to the decisive crush of the final cadence at the end. The two inner movements glow with a gentle, delicate brightness: both the singing Adagio and the lilting Andantino are nuanced examples of Brahms's mastery with scoring, thematic variation, lyrical invention, and formal elegance.



Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)
String Sextet, Op. 48 (1878)

Antonín Dvořák was the first Bohemian composer to achieve worldwide recognition, noted for turning folk material into 19th-century Romantic music. He became an accomplished violinist as a youngster, joining in the amateur music-making that accompanied the dances at his father's inn. A contemporary of Brahms and Tchaikovsky, Dvořák infused western European classical structures with a profound commitment to his Bohemian roots.

In 1878, when Dvořák composed his String Sextet, the thirty-something composer was entering his prime and just starting to be recognized internationally. With this work, we hear his technical mastery and confidence, and also the sense of a still-young composer who is eager to experiment. The genre of the string sextet, birthed by Brahms just a few years earlier, extends and deepens the sound of the standard string quartet with the addition of a second viola and a second cello.

The immaculate balancing and blending of the six voices and their interweaving melodies has a marvelous effect throughout, from the soaring first movement to the poignant Dumka, the brisk Furiant, and the folksy theme-and-variations finale. When conductor Václav Talich heard Dvořák's sextet in 1941, he declared: "Oh my word! This is so beautiful! Beautiful musical ideas, a beautiful structure and a beautiful sound! God himself must have been walking the Czech Lands when his humble servant Dvořák bequeathed to us a work of such excellence and sanctity..."