

**CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF FORT WORTH PRESENTS**  
**“Unexpected Sources”**  
**Saturday 10 May 2025 - Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth**  
**Program Notes by Laurie Shulman ©2025**

**Selections from 8 Pieces for violin and violoncello, Op. 39**

**Reinhold Glière (1875-1956)**

Few composers have witnessed so much change during their lifetimes as Reinhold Glière. Born into Czarist Russia, he outlived both Lenin and Stalin in the Soviet Union. Surprisingly, his compositions — a rich post-romantic legacy of more than 500 works — do not reflect the political and cultural tumult he lived through.

A violinist as well as composer, Glière studied with Taneyev, Arensky, Konyus, and Ippolitov-Ivanov at the Moscow Conservatory. Through them, his musical ancestry descended directly from the Russian romantic tradition. Many of Glière’s works reflect his keen interest in Ukrainian music and the indigenous music of Central Asia. He was particularly successful as a composer for the dance and is generally considered to be the father of Soviet ballet. Glière’s best compositions, including his Horn Concerto, Op. 91 and the unusual Concerto for Coloratura Soprano (1943), stand up well against the major works of Borodin and Glazunov. His most celebrated piece is the flashy “Russian Sailors’ Dance” from *The Red Poppy* ballet score.

Glière secured a teaching position at Moscow’s Gnesin School in spring 1902. Thanks to the advocacy of Sergei Taneyev, his students there included Nikolai Miaskovsky and a very

young Sergei Prokofiev. In 1905, Glière left Moscow for Berlin to study conducting with Oskar Fried for three years. He composed his 8 Duos, Op. 39 in 1909, the year following his return to the Gnesin School faculty. The dedication is to Boris Kaliushno, who is thought to have been one of Glière's music professors.

These *Huit Pièces*, as they were titled when first published, are a set of miniatures in the nineteenth-century salon tradition. Reflective in tone and harmonically conservative, they favor ternary forms. Two of Glière's titles hark back to the Baroque suite (Prelude, Gavotte), but the others are borrowed from nineteenth-century keyboard literature: Berceuse, Canzonetta, Intermezzo, Impromptu, Scherzo, and Etude.

Gary Levinson and Bion Tsang's selections begin with a Prelude in G minor. Double-stopped octaves provide a steady eighth-note pulse in the violin, eventually adding harmony to the cello's melody. They switch roles briefly in the middle, but the cello soon reclaims the theme.

The Gavotte is arguably the most retro of these Duos, gallantly reprising the eighteenth-century French dance. It is structured like a da capo aria, with a reprise of the A major gavotte following the central musette. The musette is named for a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century small bagpipe played via a bellows. It features a drone, here in D major.

Glière's Canzonetta is another songful melody, now in F major. Initially the "singer" is the violin with arpeggios in the cello supporting a wistful melody. Glière's gently rocking

underpinning gives this movement the feeling of a Venetian boat song. Midway through, the two players switch roles but only briefly. Light in mood, this is music meant to entertain.

The concluding Scherzo in B-flat major scampers along at one beat to a bar. Glière's syncopations challenge the ear to discern the triple meter; he is also more adventuresome with key changes in this movement. Double stops enrich the harmony, giving the aural illusion of more than two players. A tranquil trio section in G minor provides respite from the Scherzo, which returns for a lively, decisive close.

### **Trio in G minor, Op. 17 (1846)**

#### **Clara Schumann (1819-1896)**

So, you thought Robert Schumann was the composer in the family! His wife, the eminent pianist Clara Wieck Schumann, was encouraged by her ambitious father to compose while he was directing her career as a young instrumental prodigy. Starting in 1830, when she was eleven, he found composition teachers in Leipzig for her. Clara retained a strong interest in composition and new music her entire life. After her marriage to Robert in September 1840, the gifted young couple took pleasure in studying the chamber works of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven together, but the bride found composition difficult to pursue. Robert could not be disturbed while he was composing. Their quarters were small enough so that Clara's practicing, let alone composing at the piano, became a problem. Her responsibilities as mistress of her new household increased rapidly with the arrival of their first daughter Marie in 1841. A second daughter Elise followed in

1843 and a third, Julie in 1845. In 1846 Robert and Clara became parents to their first son Emil (who unfortunately died the next year). Thus in 1846, the year that Clara worked on her Piano Trio, she was mother to four small children on top of an extensive performing career! It is understandable that she composed little music during these busy years.

Always a great supporter of her husband's music, Clara was exceedingly critical of her own compositions. Others felt differently, holding her efforts in high esteem. No less a critic than Frédéric Chopin, who admired her pianism greatly, praised Clara's music as early as 1835. But she was hard on herself, the more so for this Trio, which she undertook only a year before Robert turned his hand to the medium of the piano trio. Inevitably, she compared her work to his. An entry in her diary from October 1848, after Robert's first piano trio had been published, reads:

There are several attractive passages in [my] Trio, and I think it is also quite successful formally...Of course it remains a woman's work, always lacking in strength and now and then in invention.

When she received the proofs of her own piece from her publisher, she confided to the same diary fears that her music was too “femininely sentimental.” Extensive revisions in the manuscript copy indicate that she was dissatisfied with first and second thoughts, making many alterations in content and form to improve the piece.

The result is a startling work indeed, free of the self-doubt implied by the diary entries and reminiscent of both Mendelssohn and, of course, Schumann. Yet Clara's music is highly individual at the same time, with ideas fully and convincingly developed. Felix Mendelssohn was quite impressed with the fine fugato passage in the finale's development section. The trio

was Clara's sole foray in the realm of large-scale sonata structures. Both outer movements are in sonata form, and the four-movement layout indicates she was thinking in broad terms. Her themes are convincing; her modulations, in some respects, less predictable than her husband's; for example, she often moves to the subdominant where textbook form would expect either dominant or relative major. Her phrase lengths are refreshingly irregular at times, in marked contrast to Robert's sometimes plodding foursquare phrases. She balances the three players surprisingly well without the emphasis on the keyboard one might expect from a virtuoso/composer.

The piece remained in Clara's personal repertoire for much of her adult life and was her most widely known piece during her lifetime, which spanned the balance of the nineteenth century. She played the first public performance in Vienna in 1849 and took the Trio on tour with Joseph Joachim to London in 1873; her friend and protégé Johannes Brahms played it in Hamburg in 1854. Generally acknowledged as her masterpiece, the Trio holds its own admirably against her husband's piano trios and deserves a place in the standard repertoire. This afternoon's performance provides a welcome opportunity for us to evaluate it with fresh ears.

### ***Dover Beach* for Baritone and String Quartet, Op. 3**

**Samuel Barber (1910-1981)**

Samuel Barber was only twenty-one when he set Matthew Arnold's *Dover Beach* for baritone and string quartet. Barber responded to the pessimism inherent in Arnold's poem,

producing a gripping piece that captures the implacability of nature (manifested by the sea and its tides) and communicates a sense of despair about the human condition. The resulting work must have surprised Barber's fellow students at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute for *Dover Beach* revealed a dark and melancholy side to his personality, incongruous in one so young. His neotonal, romantic musical style is well-suited to the Victorian text. Arnold's poem, written about 1851 and published in 1867, appears in the published score.

### **Dover Beach**

The sea is calm tonight.  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits—on the French coast the light  
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,  
Glimm'ring and vast, out in the tranquil bay.  
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!  
Only, from the long line of spray  
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,  
Listen! You hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,  
At their return, up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago  
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought  
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
Of human misery; we  
Find also in the sound a thought,  
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! For the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

— *Matthew Arnold*

Although Barber is disproportionately famous for the beloved *Adagio for Strings*, he was, first and foremost, a composer for voice. A singer himself, he was the nephew of the prominent American contralto Louise Homer and the composer Sidney Homer. He grew up with a strong interest in the relationship between words and music. While string quartet and voice are not a conventional combination, there was precedent in works by Ralph Vaughan Williams, the Italians Ildebrando Pizzetti, Ottorino Respighi and, most important, Barber's composition teacher Rosario Scalero.

Barber's biographer Barbara Heyman has suggested that his setting of *Dover Beach* might have been an expression of "personal vulnerability as he emerged from the protective cocoon of childhood into the adult world." What makes great music is its ability to communicate independent of any such significance in the composer's life. *Dover Beach* bears up well on repeated hearings. Listeners getting acquainted with it for the first time will note the tone-painting evoking the sea, the references to English renaissance polyphony in the string textures, and the rich illustration of lines like "Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow/Of human misery"

and “. . . of tremulous cadence slow.”

Although Barber scored *Dover Beach* for baritone and string quartet, he entrusted the public premiere to a woman. Mezzo-soprano Rose Bampton and the New York Art Quartet gave the first performance on 5 March 1933 at the French Institute in New York City. Barber performed it himself several times, both privately and in public. He recorded it for Sony in 1935 with the Curtis String Quartet and toured with the Curtis ensemble in Europe singing *Dover Beach* in the 1936-37 and 1937-38 concert seasons. The work takes about eight-and-a-half minutes in performance.

### **Piano Quintet in E-flat major, Op.44 (1842)**

#### **Robert Schumann (1810-1856)**

Robert and Clara Schumann were married in September 1840, the day before Clara's twenty-first birthday. The ceremony took place after almost four years of prolonged hostility and opposition from Clara's father, the prominent piano pedagogue Friedrich Wieck, and against his will. Still, Schumann was elated about his marriage. His ebullience gave rise to a stream of compositional energy, as if there were no end to the music within him.

Today, Schumann's bipolar nature is well known. His manic-depressive disorder manifested itself in composition by an obsessive focus on one particular type of writing for a



prolonged period. In the late 1830s he had composed almost exclusively for solo piano. The year 1840 brought forth an outpouring of *Lieder*, including the important song cycles *Dichterliebe* and *Frauenliebe und Leben*; 1841 was a year of orchestral works.

In 1842 Schumann turned his attention to chamber music, producing the three string quartets — Op. 41, this afternoon's piano quintet, and the Piano Quartet Op. 47, also in E-flat. Schumann was treading a new path for himself with these works. This was the composer of brilliant vignettes inspired by literary masterpieces and the writings of Jean-Paul Richter; the composer of *Carnaval* and *Faschingsschwank aus Wien*, of *Kreisleriana* and the *Davidsbundlertänze*. Schumann, the miniaturist *par excellence*, turned from the extra-musical associations which had dominated the music of his youth. Instead, he immersed himself in the study of counterpoint, particularly fugue, and the composition of absolute music. The first result of his new absorption was the three string quartets. They proved to be his only essay in the genre, but he profited from his fresh experience with them to combine the quartet ensemble with piano in his next chamber work, the Piano Quintet.

Schumann cannot truly be said to have “invented” the piano quintet as Mozart did the piano quartet. The eighteenth-century Italian Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805), who was active in the Spanish court, wrote a dozen works for the same instrumentation. They are little known today and were almost certainly unknown to Schumann whose expansion to the combination of piano-plus-string quartet was logical in light of his recent completion of the Op. 41 quartets. He was anxious to return to composing for the instrument he knew and loved best — and Clara's

instrument. At the same time, he was still filled with ideas for the string quartet. By combining the two, he brought together his own considerable musical imagination with the varied sonorities of five players.

Clara was, of course, the pianist for whom Schumann wrote the work. She played its premiere and incorporated it into her repertoire immediately, thereby contributing to its popularity. The piano quintet rapidly became one of Schumann's best-known compositions. Schumann's friend Mendelssohn played the second performance and had an early hand in the reworking of the scherzo.

The Piano Quintet is one of Schumann's happiest inspirations in the realm of formally governed, abstract music. It shows a command of form and a discipline over his musical imagination that recurred infrequently in his remaining fourteen years. The opening movement is a fine sonata-form structure with both strong and lyrical themes. As one would expect, the piano plays a major role, functioning as a partner to the string quartet as a whole rather than as one of five individual components of the musical texture. Nevertheless, the keyboard does not overshadow the string players whose parts are written effectively and idiomatically. The movement is noble and strong, characterized by aggressive foursquare phrases and a compelling vitality throughout. Schumann demonstrates his mastery of song-like writing in the lovely slow movement. He casts this march as a rondo with strongly contrasting episodes interrupting its tentative main idea.

Schumann's scherzo is dazzling. This whirlwind bravura tour de force is constructed, remarkably, of ascending and descending scale passages. Both its trios provide rhythmic contrast; the second, in particular, contains probably the most challenging technical writing for strings in the work.

The finale is one of the most extraordinary movements in the entire chamber music literature. Schumann teases us with G minor before firmly grounding his musical material in the home tonality of E-flat major. As in the first movement, he shows a gratifying command of form and musical matter throughout; the finale is a convincing sonata-rondo. But in this *Allegro ma non troppo*, he saves his finest writing for last. In the splendid coda — another fugato — he not only concentrates his most technically secure contrapuntal writing but also incorporates the main theme of the first movement. This coda bears proud testimony to his hard-won mastery of counterpoint. Schumann weaves expertly, bringing his quintet to a brilliant, unified, and satisfying close.