Season Finale

April 17-18, 2010

Sean Schafer Hennessy	Pike's Peak or Bust!
Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)	Ballade in F-Sharp Major, op. 19 Susan Grace, piano
Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829-1869)	Grande Tarantelle for Piano & Orchestra, op. 67 Susan Grace, piano

INTERMISSION

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)	Symphony No. 4 in B-flat Major, op. 60 I. Adagio – Allegro Vivace II. Adagio III. Allegro vivace IV. Allegro ma non troppo

It is not difficult to see why Fauré's example was inspiring to a generation of composers who were quickly tiring of impressionism. They easily overlooked the fact that Fauré had his roots in the Romantic movement, because his was a pre-Wagnerian brand of romanticism—delicate, reserved, and aristocratic. Moreover, no matter what its derivation may have been, it possessed all the earmarks of the French temperament: harmonic sensitivity, impeccable taste, classic restraint, and a love of clear lines and well-made proportions.—Aaron Copland

Music moves me all the more when the methods used are clear, correct, precise, and even concise.—Fauré

Fauré wrote those words in 1896 at the age of fifty-one. By then he had composed a quantity of orchestral music, but there were no symphonies or concertos, and none to follow. Instead, he applied his principles of clarity, precision and concision to smaller musical forms. Composition for Fauré was primarily "for music's sake"—the pure *idea.*

Fauré was the youngest of six children and a precocious talent. When he was nine, his parents sent him to the Niedermeyer school in Paris, known for its training in church music, and that training influenced Fauré throughout his career. In 1861, Saint-Saëns arrived at the school to teach piano, broadening Fauré's outlook with music of Wagner and Liszt, and a lifelong friendship formed between them.

Fauré started his professional career as an organist but was pulled away for service in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. After returning to church music, he was deeply moved at hearing the Wagner's *Ring* cycle. He managed to take the best aspects of Wagner without joining the legions of Wagner imitators of the day. In 1896, he obtained a professorship of composition at the Paris Conservatory, where his influence was felt for decades through influential students like Maurice Ravel and Nadia Boulanger. He eventually became director of the Conservatory, which proved a mixed blessing, as he found less and less time for composition. Worse yet, his hearing started to fail, forcing him to pare down his harmonic language and leaving him looking outdated and obsolete during the rush of late Impressionism and modernism that was sweeping through France.

Fauré's **Ballade for Piano and Orchestra in F-Sharp Major, op. 19** began its life in 1879 as a piece for solo piano. In 1881, Fauré adapted the piece for small orchestra, retaining the piano solo, and dedicated the piece to Saint-Saëns. The orchestrated *Ballade* was premiered on April 23, 1881, with Fauré at the piano. Fauré presented the *Ballade* to Liszt at their second meeting in Zürich in July, 1882. Reading through the piece, Liszt suddenly stopped and said, "I have no more fingers," asking Fauré to continue and underscoring the elusive individuality of the piece. The *Ballade* is in three distinct but continuous sections: a wistful *Andante cantabile*, a more animated central section *(Allegro moderato)*; and a joyful but delicate conclusion.

Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829-1869) was born to a Jewish businessman from London and a white Haitian Creole in New Orleans, where he was exposed to a wide variety of musical traditions. Gottschalk played the piano from an early age and was soon recognized as a wunderkind by the New Orleans bourgeois establishment. In 1840, he gave his informal public debut at the new St. Charles Hotel.

Two years later, at the age of 13, Gottschalk left the United States and sailed for Europe to study classical music. The Paris Conservatoire, however, initially rejected his application on the grounds of his nationality. (His examiner quipped: "America is a country of steam engines.") Gottschalk gradually gained access through family friends.

Returning to the United States in 1853, he traveled extensively through North, Central, and South America. By the 1860s, Gottschalk had established himself as the foremost pianist in the New World. Although born and raised in New Orleans, he was a supporter of the Union during the Civil War. He returned to his native city only occasionally for concerts, but always introduced himself as a New Orleans native. In 1865, he was forced to leave the United States because of a scandalous affair with a student at the Oakland Female Seminary.

Gottschalk traveled to South America, continuing to give frequent concerts. During a performance in Rio de Janeiro on November 24, 1869, he collapsed with malaria. (Ironically, he had just finished playing his romantic piece, *Morte!!*.) He never recovered from the collapse, dying three weeks later at his hotel in Brazil, probably from an overdose of quinine. In 1870, his remains were returned to the United States and interred at the Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York.

Gottschalk's **Grand Tarantelle for Piano and Orchestra, op. 67** was discovered in a two-piano version among twenty-five other works in his personal papers shortly after his untimely death. Hershy Kay would later orchestrate the *Grand Tarantelle* into a dazzling showcase for piano and orchestra. George Balanchine would also choreograph a ballet, *Tarantella*, to the piece. As a dance form, the tarantella is surrounded by confusion: The stately courtship tarantella is danced by a couple or couples, short in duration, graceful and elegant, and features characteristic music. The supposedly curative or symptomatic tarantella, which is agitated in character and may last for hours or even days, is danced solo by a supposed victim of a tarantula bite. The confusion is apparently because the spiders, condition, its sufferers ("tarantolati") and the dances all derive their names from the city of Taranto. In modern music, the tarantella is usually based on the later concept, and usually takes the form of a fast, almost erratic 6/8 dance in which the victim not only dances out the tarantula bite, but perhaps stomps a few tarantulas as well.

Keep your eye on him; he will make the world talk about him some day.—Mozart, in a letter to his father dated 1787, after meeting Beethoven.
Beethoven was the pillar of smoke that led to the Promised Land.—Franz Liszt.

Beethoven's time was one of revolutions and wars, terror and reform, poverty and extravagance and in many ways his music reflects the turbulence of the age in which he lived. Austria was at war with Ottoman Turkey, the French were in dispute with Austria, and England with France. The fall of the Bastille in 1789 was a sign of the end of the old order, extinguished forever. The period brought wide cultural changes, changes in political philosophy and society, and in the arts. Beethoven is seen as the bridge from the restraint and preoccupation with form of the Classical era, to the wildly personalized and emotional Romantic era.

Beethoven had a remarkable musical output. Just to name a few: 32 piano sonatas, 16 string quartets, 6 piano concerti plus a fragment (of which only 5 remain in the repertoire), 10 violin sonatas, 4 cello sonatas, 172 folk song arrangements, 60 canons and "musical jokes," at least 2 ballets, an opera ("Fidelio"), and a large number of other works for chamber ensembles, choir, voice … *and* 9 great symphonies that still represent the highest consistent level of symphonic output by any composer in history.

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in the provincial court city of Bonn, Germany, probably on December 16, 1770. Beethoven's talent was such that, at the age of 12, he was already assistant to the organist Christian Gottlob Neefe, with whom he studied. Attempts to establish him as a prodigy in the mold of Mozart had little success, however.

In 1787 Beethoven was sent to Vienna, but his mother fell ill, and he had to return to Bonn almost immediately. She died a few months later, and in 1789 Beethoven himself requested that his

alcoholic father be retired, a move that left him responsible for his two younger brothers. Beethoven left Bonn for Vienna a second time in November of 1792, in order to study with Haydn.

In 1794 French forces occupied the Rhineland; consequently, Beethoven's ties with and support from the Bonn court came to an end. His father had died a month after his departure from Bonn, and his brothers joined him in Vienna. He remained there the rest of his life, leaving only for holidays and concerts in nearby cities. His only extended journey was to Prague, Dresden, and Berlin in 1796. Beethoven never held an official position in Vienna. He supported himself by giving concerts, by teaching piano, and increasingly through the sale of his compositions. Members of the Viennese aristocracy were his steady patrons, and in 1809 three of them—Prince Kinsky, Prince Lobkowitz, and the Archduke Rudolph—even guaranteed him a yearly income with the sole condition that he remain in Vienna.

The last 30 years of Beethoven's life were shaped by a series of personal crises, the first of which was the onset of deafness. The early symptoms, noticeable to the composer already before 1800, affected him socially more than musically. His reaction was despair, resignation, and defiance. Resolving finally to "seize fate by the throat," he emerged from the crisis with a series of triumphant works that mark the beginning of a new period in his stylistic development.

A second crisis a decade later was the breaking off of a relationship with an unnamed lady (probably Antonie Brentano, the wife of a friend) known to us as the "Immortal Beloved," as Beethoven addressed her in a series of letters in July 1812. This was apparently the most serious of several such relationships with women who were in some way out of his reach, and its traumatic conclusion was followed by a lengthy period of resignation and reduced musical activity.

During this time Beethoven's deafness advanced to the stage that he could no longer perform publicly, and he required a slate or little notebooks (now known as "conversation books") to communicate with visitors. The death of his brother Caspar Carl in 1815 led to a 5-year legal struggle for custody of Caspar's son Karl, then 9 years old, in whom Beethoven saw a last chance for the domestic life that had otherwise eluded him. His possessiveness of Karl provoked a final crisis in the summer of 1826, when the young man attempted suicide. Shortly thereafter, Beethoven's health began to fail, and he died on March 26, 1827 in Vienna.

Biographers and annotators cannot be blamed for waxing lyrical over the **Symphony No. 4 in B-Flat Major, op. 60**. Few can resist reading a romance in its pages, and some even believe it is a testament of passion to the infamous "Immortal Beloved" in Beethoven's famous undated and unaddressed letter.

Who was the "Immortal Beloved"? A subject of much conjecture! There was the Countess Theresa von Brunswick, whom Beethoven wooed and won … for a while. Another likely suspect is Theresa's cousin, Countess Giulietta Guicciardi. While there is no way to know for certain if Theresa or Giulietta inspired the symphony, facts and circumstances seem to favor Theresa. And yet, there is very little to connect the symphony directly to romance.

What is beyond question is that the spring and summer of 1806, when the symphony was written, were one of the happiest times in Beethoven's stormy career. The spring had been almost purely holiday, spent in Hungary on the estate of Count Brunswick. There he had reveled in the beautiful natural surroundings and courted the Count's sister, Theresa. And there, in May, he apparently became engaged to her … or so Theresa said. Customary to Beethoven's love life, the affair came to nothing.

The official dedication of the Fourth Symphony is to Count Franz von Oppersdorf, to whom Beethoven had been introduced by his friend and patron, Prince Lichnowsky. Oppersdorf's private orchestra performed Beethoven's Second Symphony, much to Beethoven's delight, and the Count decided to commission a symphony of his own. The delighted Beethoven pocketed an advance of five hundred florins. However, when the Fourth Symphony finally arrived, the Count

was anything but pleased; by the time he received it, the Fourth Symphony had already been sold and published. No further commissions came from the Count.

The Fourth Symphony is unique for its dark, mystic introduction—a look ahead to the opening measures of the Ninth Symphony, at least in concept. The first, third, and fourth movements are all rather lively, quick, and technically challenging for the orchestra. The second movement, however, stands out from the rest, with its charming metronomic rhythmic accompaniment, lengthy yet simple phrases, and a curiously loud tonic/dominant ending where one would expect a peaceful resolution.