CACTUS PEAR MUSIC FESTIVAL PRESENTS

THE INFINITE HORIZON

30 YEARS AND JUST GETTING STARTED

INVITATION TO THE DANCE	THE SUN ALSO RISES	TO INFINITY AND BEYOND	BRAVE NEW WORLD	RICHES TO RAGS
FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
JULY 10 | 7:30PM	**JULY 11 | 3PM**	**JULY 12 | 3PM**	**JULY 18 | 3PM**	**JULY 19 | 3PM**
UPTOWN BALLROOM BLANCO, TX	DIANE BENNACK HALL SAN ANTONIO, TX	DIANE BENNACK HALL SAN ANTONIO, TX	JO LONG THEATRE SAN ANTONIO, TX	JO LONG THEATRE SAN ANTONIO, TX

JULY 10-19, 2026
BLANCO & SAN ANTONIO, TX

Cactus Pear
MUSIC FESTIVAL

Free tickets at **cpmf.us**

THE INFINITE HORIZON

30 YEARS AND *JUST GETTING STARTED*

Program Notes by Artistic Director Jeffrey Sykes

For three decades, Cactus Pear Music Festival has brought world-class chamber music to San Antonio—cultivating a deep love for the art form through accessible performances, imaginative programming, and meaningful educational initiatives. Founded in 1997 by Stephanie Sant'Ambrogio, CPMF has grown into a vibrant cultural presence, sustained by a devoted audience and a shared belief that great music should be available to all.

As we celebrate our 30th anniversary season, we look forward with *The Infinite Horizon*—a season devoted to transformation, renewal, and boundless possibility. Across two weeks, each program explores moments of change: beginnings and endings, tradition and reinvention, loss and transcendence, elegance and exuberance.

Program notes ©2026 by Jeffrey Sykes, artistic director of Cactus Pear Music Festival

Cactus Pear
MUSIC FESTIVAL

WEEKEND 1

Invitation to the Dance

FRIDAY, JULY 10 | 7:30 PM

UPTOWN BLANCO BALLROOM | BLANCO, TEXAS

A co-presentation of Blanco Performing Arts and Cactus Pear Music Festival

An evening of elegance, reflection, and transcendence—where music invites us not only to listen, but to move, to feel, and to step beyond the ordinary.

This opening program traces a journey from the intimate to the infinite, perfectly launching The Infinite Horizon. Each work expands the listener's sense of space and time: from the inward lyricism of Vieuxtemps, through Mozart's poised and luminous clarity, to Messiaen's visionary sound world in which time itself seems to dissolve. The program invites us not only into the season, but into a larger way of listening—one that moves from the personal to the transcendent.

HENRI VIEUXTEMPS (1820–1881)

***Élégie* for viola and piano, op. 30 (1848)**

Henri Vieuxtemps (1820–1881) was one of the leading virtuoso violinists of the 19th century and a central figure of the Franco-Belgian violin school. A celebrated performer from a young age, he toured widely and earned a reputation not only for his technical brilliance but also for the seriousness and depth of his musical voice. Unlike many virtuosi of his era, Vieuxtemps sought to unite display with substance, producing works that combine lyricism, structural integrity, and expressive range. A significant chapter of his career unfolded in St. Petersburg, where he served at the court of Tsar Nicholas I and engaged deeply with the rich musical life of Russia.

The ***Élégie* for viola and piano, Op. 30,** was composed during Vieuxtemps's Russian years and premiered in St. Petersburg on March 1, 1848. It was later published in 1854 and dedicated to Matvey Wielhorsky, a prominent musical patron and accomplished amateur cellist who played an important role in bringing Vieuxtemps to Russia and remained a valued collaborator. The piece belongs to a tradition of lyrical character works, offering a more intimate, inward form of expression than the virtuoso showpieces for which the composer was widely known. Its long, singing lines and gently supportive piano writing allow the viola to explore a wide expressive palette, from dark introspection to moments of warmth and release. Contemporary listeners noted both its expressive depth and its understated character. It stands today as a finely crafted and deeply felt meditation—a work of quiet intensity, poised at the edge of something unspoken—music that feels less like a conclusion than the beginning of a journey.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)

Piano Concerto no. 14 in E-flat Major, K. 449 (1784)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) entered a new phase of his career in the early 1780s after breaking with the court of Salzburg and establishing himself in Vienna as a freelance composer and performer. It was a bold move, but one that opened the door to an extraordinary period of creativity—especially in the piano concerto. In these works, Mozart found an ideal synthesis between public display and private expression, combining virtuosity, drama, and lyricism in a way that feels almost operatic. Written in 1784 for his gifted pupil Barbara (Babette) von Ployer, the **Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, K. 449** stands at the threshold of his "great" concerto period. Mozart himself performed it that year to great success, and notably, it was the first work he entered into his own thematic catalog—a sign that he recognized its importance. In its balance of elegance and invention, the concerto suggests a beginning that is already rich with possibility.

Like several of the concertos from this period, K. 449 could be performed either with full orchestra or in a more intimate **"a quattro"** version, with string quartet accompaniment. This flexibility reflects both practical considerations and Mozart's acute awareness of his market: such arrangements made the works accessible for private salons and domestic music-making. Heard in this reduced form, the concerto reveals its chamber-music core, with a heightened sense of dialogue and transparency between piano and strings.

The first movement *(Allegro vivace)* is remarkable for its restless energy and profusion of ideas. Mozart introduces a surprising number of contrasting themes in quick succession, creating the impression of a cast of characters entering the stage. Beneath the bright surface lies a more unsettled tonal world, with persistent shadows of C minor lending the music an undercurrent of tension. The piano enters not as a mere soloist but as a partner in conversation—sometimes echoing, sometimes interrupting, sometimes transforming the material in unexpected ways.

The *Andantino* offers a striking contrast: poised, lyrical, and inward-looking. Its gently unfolding lines and subtle harmonic shifts create an atmosphere of intimate reflection, with moments of quiet melancholy that seem to anticipate Mozart's later operatic writing. The movement's fluid structure—blending elements of rondo and sonata form—adds to its sense of quiet originality.

The finale *(Allegro ma non troppo)* combines the buoyancy of a rondo with Mozart's growing fascination with contrapuntal play. Its lively main theme returns in varied guises, never quite the same twice, while episodes introduce both wit and depth—including a surprising turn to C minor that recalls the tensions of the first movement. In the closing moments, Mozart transforms the theme into a lilting 6/8, as if reimagining the entire movement in a new light—a playful and ingenious conclusion to a concerto that balances brilliance, intimacy, and imagination in equal measure.

OLIVIER MESSIAEN (1908–1992)

***Quatour pour la fin du temps* (Quartet for the End of Time)**
for clarinet, violin, cello, and piano (1940–41)

In March 1940, **Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992)** was serving as a French non-combatant medical assistant when he was captured by the German army and taken to the prisoner-of-war camp Stalag VIII-A in Silesia. As a non-combatant, he was not considered a threat, and when his captors discovered he was a composer, he was relieved of regular duties and given time to work. A sympathetic guard, Karl-Albert Brüll—a music lover—quietly supported him, providing manuscript paper and pencils. (Brüll would later help secure Messiaen's release by forging documents in March 1941.) Conditions remained harsh, but musicians in the camp were often spared the most strenuous labor, and within this unlikely environment, a remarkable creative process began.

Messiaen soon discovered three fellow musicians among the prisoners: a clarinetist, Henri Akoka; a violinist, Jean le Boulaire; and a cellist, Étienne Pasquier. Akoka had been permitted to keep his clarinet, and Messiaen quickly wrote a short solo piece for him. As instruments gradually became available—a violin located within the camp, a cello purchased through donations from fellow prisoners—the composer expanded his vision into a trio. When an upright piano was finally obtained, he reshaped the work into a quartet for the exact combination of instruments at hand.

The *Quartet for the End of Time* was completed at the end of 1940 and premiered in the camp on January 15, 1941, before an audience of thousands of prisoners and guards gathered in the cold. Messiaen later recalled that "Never was I listened to with such rapt attention and comprehension."

The title of the work, *Quartet for the End of Time*, carries both religious and musical significance. A devout Catholic with mystical leanings, Messiaen drew inspiration from the tenth chapter of the Book of Revelation, in which the seventh angel announces that "there should be time no longer." The Quartet is not meant as a literal depiction of the Apocalypse, nor as a reflection of Messiaen's own captivity, but rather as a yearning for the end of past, present, and future, and the beginning of Eternity—an opening onto a horizon beyond time itself. Musically, this idea is expressed through a departure from the orderly, forward-moving sense of time that characterizes much of the Western tradition. Messiaen employs flexible, irregular meter, ostinato bass patterns, and "non-retrogradable" rhythms—some derived from Hindu sources—to subvert any sense of linear progression. The result is a powerful impression of timelessness, an approach that would later resonate with minimalist composers of the late 20th century.

In a preface to the score, Messiaen commented on each of the movements:

Liturgy of crystal. Between three and four o'clock in the morning, the awakening of the birds: a blackbird or a solo nightingale improvises, surrounded by efflorescent sound, by a halo of trills lost high in the trees...

Vocalise, *for the Angel who announces the end of Time*. The first and third parts (very short) evoke...

OLIVIER MESSIAEN (1908–1992) *(continued)*

the power of this mighty angel, a rainbow upon his head and clothed with a cloud, who sets one foot on the sea and one foot on the earth. In the middle section are the impalpable harmonies of heaven. In the piano, sweet cascades of blue-orange chords, enclosing in their distant chimes the almost plainchant song of the violin and violoncello.

Abyss of the birds. Clarinet alone. The abyss is Time with its sadness, its weariness. The birds are the opposite to Time; they are our desire for light, for stars, for rainbows, and for jubilant songs. Interlude. Scherzo, of a more individual character than the other movements, but linked to them nevertheless by certain melodic recollections. Praise to the Eternity of Jesus. Jesus is considered here as the Word. A broad phrase, infinitely slow, on the violoncello, magnifies with love and reverence the eternity of the Word, powerful and gentle, … "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Dance of fury, *for the seven trumpets.* Rhythmically, the most characteristic piece in the series. The four instruments in unison take on the aspect of gongs and trumpets (the first six trumpets of the Apocalypse were followed by various catastrophes, the trumpet of the seventh angel announced the consummation of the mystery of God). Use of added values, rhythms augmented or diminished… Music of stone, of formidable, sonorous granite…
A mingling of rainbows, *for the Angel who announces the end of Time*. Certain passages from the second movement recur here. The powerful angel appears, above all the rainbow that covers him… In my dreams I hear and see a catalogue of chords and melodies, familiar colours and forms… The swords of fire, these outpourings of blue-orange lava, these turbulent stars…

Praise to the Immortality of Jesus. Expansive solo violin, counterpart to the violoncello solo of the fifth movement. Why this second encomium? It addresses more specifically the second aspect of Jesus, Jesus the Man, the Word made flesh… Its slow ascent toward the most extreme point of tension is the ascension of man toward his God, of the child of God toward his Father, of the being made divine toward Paradise.

In the *Quartet for the End of Time*, Messiaen transforms extreme limitation into boundless imagination. Composed in captivity, the work does not dwell on suffering, but instead offers a vision of transcendence—music that suspends time even as it unfolds within it, inviting the listener into a space of stillness, wonder, and profound spiritual depth.

WEEKEND 1

The Sun Also Rises

SATURDAY, JULY 11 | 3 PM

DIANE BENNACK HALL, UIW | SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

A program of renewal and fresh beginnings.

This program explores renewal not as a sudden event, but as a process—emerging through clarity, energy, and struggle. Mozart's concerto opens with brightness and balance, a music of poised beginnings. Khachaturian's trio brings rhythmic vitality and folk-inspired color, suggesting growth and movement. Bloch's powerful quintet moves into deeper emotional territory, confronting turmoil while ultimately reaching toward resolution. Together, these works trace a path from light through intensity to renewal—an arc that lies at the heart of The Infinite Horizon.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)

Piano Concerto no. 14 in E-flat Major, K. 449 (1784)

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ARAM KHACHATURIAN (1903–1978)

Trio for clarinet, violin, and piano (1932)

Aram Khachaturian (1903–1978) was one of Armenia's most celebrated composers and among the first from that tradition to achieve international recognition. Born in Tbilisi (in present-day Georgia) to an Armenian family, his earliest musical impressions came from the folk songs he heard around him as a child, especially his mother's singing. Remarkably, he began formal musical training relatively late, moving to Moscow in 1921, where he initially studied biology before enrolling at the Gnesin Institute. There he studied cello and composition, later continuing at the Moscow Conservatory with Nikolai Miaskovsky. Throughout his life, Khachaturian maintained a deep connection to the sounds of Armenian and neighboring musical traditions—modal melodies, flexible rhythms, and improvisatory gestures—which became defining features of his style. His career unfolded within the Soviet system, where folk-inspired music was often encouraged as a way of expressing cultural identity within an accessible, "people-centered" artistic framework.

Khachaturian composed his **Trio for Clarinet, Violin, and Piano** in 1932 while still a student at the Moscow Conservatory—the same year as his well-known Toccata for piano and well before the ballets and concertos that would bring him worldwide fame. The trio captures a voice in the process of becoming—already distinctive, yet still unfolding toward what lies ahead.The work quickly attracted attention and, with the support of Sergei Prokofiev, was published in Paris soon after its completion—though, notably, it carries no formal dedication, reflecting its origins as a student work rather than a piece written for a particular patron or performer. From its opening measures, the trio reveals a strikingly individual voice. The first movement *(Andante con dolore, con molto espressione)* unfolds in a rhapsodic, improvisatory manner, with richly ornamented melodies passed between the instruments and repeated in ever-changing guises, creating a hypnotic, coloristic atmosphere. The

second movement *(Allegro)* contrasts sharply, juxtaposing energetic, dance-like passages with more relaxed, folk-inflected melodies, including a central section that blends these contrasting ideas. The finale *(Moderato)* presents a set of variations on another folk-inspired theme, gradually intensifying before the music gently dissipates.

Folk influence lies at the heart of the trio's sound world. Khachaturian draws on the melodic contours, rhythmic vitality, and ornamental style of Armenian and broader Eurasian traditions, giving the music its distinctive "exotic" color. At the same time, this reliance on folk material aligned with Soviet cultural expectations of the 1930s, which favored music that was accessible and rooted in the life of the people. In this way, the trio reflects both a deeply personal musical language and the broader artistic environment in which it was created—a work that balances individuality with cultural and historical context.

ERNEST BLOCH (1880–1959)

Piano Quintet No. 1 (1921–23)

Ernest Bloch (1880–1959) was one of the most distinctive musical voices of the twentieth century, a composer whose work speaks with unusual directness and intensity to performers and audiences alike. Born in Switzerland and later active in the United States, Bloch first gained widespread recognition through works that drew explicitly on Jewish themes, including Schelomo, the symphony Israel, the Sacred Service, and his settings of the Psalms. So strong was this association that his music has often been heard through that lens—even in works that carry no explicit program or extra-musical reference.

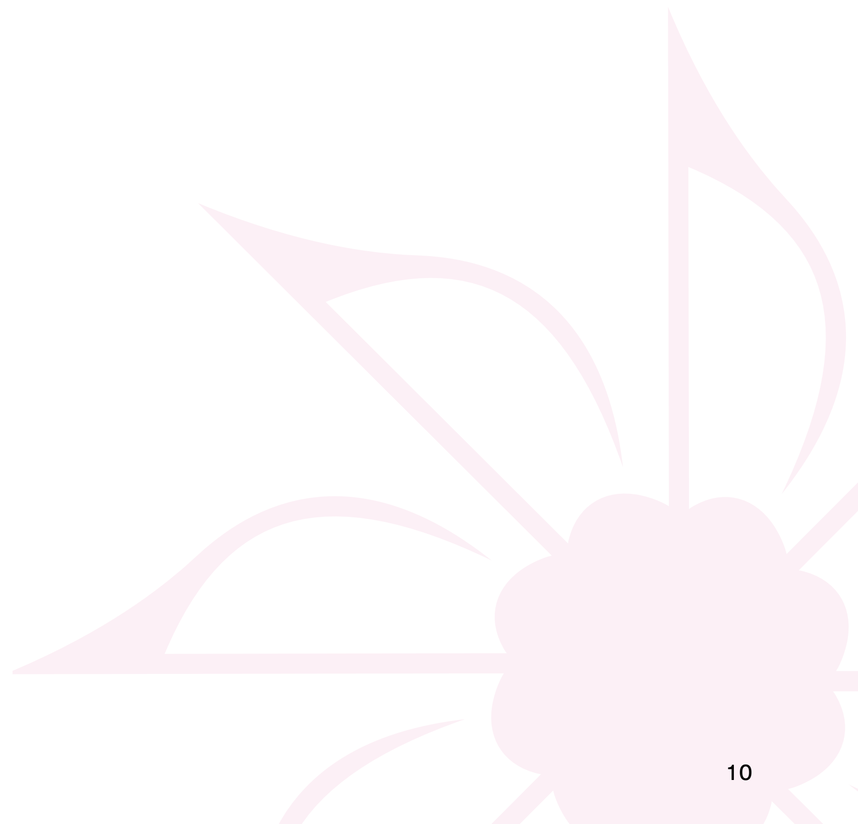
One such work is the **Piano Quintet No. 1,** composed in Cleveland between 1921 and 1923, shortly after Bloch assumed the directorship of the Cleveland Institute of Music. Despite the absence of a stated program, commentators have frequently sought to interpret the work in cultural or even mystical terms. The critic David Ewen described it as "the most successful of Bloch's attempts to give expression to his race," while Alex Cohen, acknowledging that the quintet is not program music, nevertheless heard in it "aromatic scents, mysterious calms and violent storms," culminating in what he vividly called "a joyous orgy of savages beneath a tropical sun." Such responses say as much about the work's overwhelming sensory impact as they do about any specific meaning.

What is beyond dispute is the quintet's extraordinary expressive range. The music unfolds with relentless energy, shifting between turbulence and lyricism with a kind of elemental force. From the opening measures, Bloch employs quarter tones—pitches that fall between the standard notes of the scale—not as abstract experiment but as a means of intensifying expression. These inflections register less as dissonance than as emotional pressure: sobs, cries, and visceral gestures that seem to stretch the very fabric of tonal language.

Throughout the work, Bloch's writing is richly colored and often highly dramatic, at times pushing the instruments to extremes of register, texture, and character. In the finale, the pianist is even instructed to play "like an exotic bird," a striking indication of the music's imaginative and almost theatrical quality. Yet for all its intensity, the work ultimately turns inward: after nearly thirty minutes of surging, impassioned music,

it closes with a coda of remarkable tenderness in C major. Of the final chord, the English critic Ernest Newman wrote that "there is no more welcome, more impressive, more clinching, more conclusive, more authoritative C major chord in all music."

The Piano Quintet No. 1 was premiered on November 11, 1923, by pianist Harold Bauer and the Lenox String Quartet. Writing in *The New York Times*, critic Olin Downes hailed it as "the greatest work in its form since the piano quintets of Brahms and César Franck"—a remarkable endorsement, and one that reflects the work's enduring power and ambition.



WEEKEND 1

To Infinity and Beyond

SUNDAY, JULY 12 | 3 PM

DIANE BENNACK HALL, UIW | SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

> *Endings transformed into something larger—music that reaches beyond.*
>
> *This program returns to the idea of transcendence, but from a different angle. Vieuxtemps' intimate lyricism opens a deeply personal space; Brahms's C minor quartet expands that space into something turbulent and searching. The emotional trajectory culminates in Messiaen's Quartet for the End of Time, where the very idea of musical time is transformed into something eternal. If the opening program invites us across a threshold, this one carries us fully into the horizon itself.*

HENRI VIEUXTEMPS (1820–1881)

***Élégie* for viola and piano, op. 30 (1848)**

Henri Vieuxtemps (1820–1881) was one of the leading virtuoso violinists of the 19th century and a central figure of the Franco-Belgian violin school. A celebrated performer from a young age, he toured widely and earned a reputation not only for his technical brilliance but also for the seriousness and depth of his musical voice. Unlike many virtuosi of his era, Vieuxtemps sought to unite display with substance, producing works that combine lyricism, structural integrity, and expressive range. A significant chapter of his career unfolded in St. Petersburg, where he served at the court of Tsar Nicholas I and engaged deeply with the rich musical life of Russia.

The ***Élégie* for viola and piano, Op. 30,** was composed during Vieuxtemps's Russian years and premiered in St. Petersburg on March 1, 1848. It was later published in 1854 and dedicated to Matvey Wielhorsky, a prominent musical patron and accomplished amateur cellist who played an important role in bringing Vieuxtemps to Russia and remained a valued collaborator. The piece belongs to a tradition of lyrical character works, offering a more intimate, inward form of expression than the virtuoso showpieces for which the composer was widely known. Its long, singing lines and gently supportive piano writing allow the viola to explore a wide expressive palette, from dark introspection to moments of warmth and release. Contemporary listeners noted both its expressive depth and its understated character. It stands today as a finely crafted and deeply felt meditation—a work of quiet intensity, poised at the edge of something unspoken—music that feels less like a conclusion than the beginning of a journey.

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)

Piano Quartet in C minor, op. 60
(written 1855–75; published 1875)

When **Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)** wrote to his publisher Simrock regarding the **Piano Quartet in C minor, op. 60**, he included this remarkable suggestion about the title page: "You might display a picture on the title page. Namely a head—with a pistol pointing at it. Now you can form an idea of the music! I will send you my photograph for this purpose! You could also give it a blue frockcoat, yellow trousers, and riding boots, since you appear to like color printing."

For any 19th-century German reader, the reference would have been unmistakable: Brahms is invoking Werther, the tragic hero of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. In Goethe's 1774 work, the sensitive young Werther falls hopelessly in love with Charlotte, who is already married to his friend Albert. Unable to resolve the conflict between passion and duty, he borrows Albert's pistols under false pretenses and takes his own life. The novel's impact was immediate and profound, shaping Romantic sensibility across Europe. Even Werther's distinctive attire—a blue coat with yellow waistcoat and trousers—became a fashion among disaffected youth. Its influence was so intense that it reportedly inspired a wave of copycat suicides.

Brahms recognized something of himself in Werther. After a fateful meeting with Robert Schumann and Clara Schumann in 1853, he quickly became part of their inner circle. Robert championed his music, arranging for its publication, while Clara guided his pianism and helped launch his performing career. This period of artistic and personal closeness was abruptly shattered in 1854, when Robert attempted suicide by throwing himself into the Rhine and was subsequently confined to an asylum.

In the months that followed, Brahms became a central figure in Clara's life, helping to manage family responsibilities, care for the children, and oversee Robert's affairs while Clara continued her concert career. It was during this intensely charged period that Brahms developed a deep and complicated love for her. He confessed to their mutual friend Joseph Joachim, "I love her and am under her spell. I often have to restrain myself forcibly from just quietly putting my arms around her and even—I don't know, it seems to me so natural that she could not misunderstand." The feeling appears to have been mutual, yet both were constrained by circumstance, loyalty, and the continuing presence of Robert—first in life, and then, after his death in 1856, in memory.

It was in this emotional landscape that Brahms began work on what would become the Piano Quartet in C minor. The earliest version dates from 1855, at the height of these personal tensions. Robert's death the following year altered the situation profoundly: whatever future Brahms may have imagined with Clara became even more complicated, and the emotional weight surrounding the work intensified. He soon set the quartet aside—likely because its expressive world struck too close to home—and over the following years completed the Piano Quartets in G minor and A major, op. 25 and 26.

When Brahms returned to the C minor quartet in 1869, he undertook extensive revisions, including transposing it from its original C-sharp minor to C minor; yet he remained dissatisfied. Only in 1873–75 did the work finally assume its definitive form. The first and third movements

largely stem from the earlier period, the scherzo from the intervening years, and the finale from this final phase of composition. Few works in Brahms's output had such a long and troubled gestation. This prolonged process is reflected in the music itself: few works by Brahms reach the same level of dark intensity as the opening movement, with its restless energy and sense of inward struggle, while the slow movement offers music of extraordinary lyric beauty—radiant, inward, and deeply consoling. The result is a work that feels both deeply personal and rigorously constructed—a rare glimpse of Brahms at his most vulnerable, and one of his most powerful statements in chamber music.
The Piano Quartet in C minor was first performed in Vienna on November 18, 1875, with Brahms at the piano and members of the Hellmesberger Quartet.

OLIVIER MESSIAEN (1908–1992)

Quatour pour la fin du temps **(Quartet for the End of Time)**
for clarinet, violin, cello, and piano (1940–41)

In March 1940, **Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992)** was serving as a French non-combatant medical assistant when he was captured by the German army and taken to the prisoner-of-war camp Stalag VIII-A in Silesia. As a non-combatant, he was not considered a threat, and when his captors discovered he was a composer, he was relieved of regular duties and given time to work. A sympathetic guard, Karl-Albert Brüll—a music lover—quietly supported him, providing manuscript paper and pencils. (Brüll would later help secure Messiaen's release by forging documents in March 1941.) Conditions remained harsh, but musicians in the camp were often spared the most strenuous labor, and within this unlikely environment, a remarkable creative process began.

Messiaen soon discovered three fellow musicians among the prisoners: a clarinetist, Henri Akoka; a violinist, Jean le Boulaire; and a cellist, Étienne Pasquier. Akoka had been permitted to keep his clarinet, and Messiaen quickly wrote a short solo piece for him. As instruments gradually became available—a violin located within the camp, a cello purchased through donations from fellow prisoners—the composer expanded his vision into a trio. When an upright piano was finally obtained, he reshaped the work into a quartet for the exact combination of instruments at hand.

The *Quartet for the End of Time* was completed at the end of 1940 and premiered in the camp on January 15, 1941, before an audience of thousands of prisoners and guards gathered in the cold. Messiaen later recalled that "Never was I listened to with such rapt attention and comprehension."

The title of the work, *Quartet for the End of Time*, carries both religious and musical significance. A devout Catholic with mystical leanings, Messiaen drew inspiration from the tenth chapter of the Book of Revelation, in which the seventh angel announces that "there should be time no longer." The Quartet is not meant as a literal depiction of the Apocalypse, nor as a reflection of Messiaen's own captivity, but rather as a yearning for the end of past, present, and future, and the beginning of Eternity—an opening onto a horizon beyond time itself. Musically, this idea is expressed through a departure from the orderly, forward-moving sense of time that characterizes much of the Western tradition. Messiaen employs flexible, irregular meter, ostinato bass patterns, and "non-retrogradable" rhythms—some derived from

Hindu sources—to subvert any sense of linear progression. The result is a powerful impression of timelessness, an approach that would later resonate with minimalist composers of the late 20th century.

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Vocalise, *for the Angel who announces the end of Time*. The first and third parts (very short) evoke the power of this mighty angel, a rainbow upon his head and clothed with a cloud, who sets one foot on the sea and one foot on the earth. In the middle section are the impalpable harmonies of heaven. In the piano, sweet cascades of blue-orange chords, enclosing in their distant chimes the almost plainchant song of the violin and violoncello.

Abyss of the birds. Clarinet alone. The abyss is Time with its sadness, its weariness. The birds are the opposite to Time; they are our desire for light, for stars, for rainbows, and for jubilant songs. Interlude. Scherzo, of a more individual character than the other movements, but linked to them nevertheless by certain melodic recollections. Praise to the Eternity of Jesus. Jesus is considered here as the Word. A broad phrase, infinitely slow, on the violoncello, magnifies with love and reverence the eternity of the Word, powerful and gentle, ... "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Dance of fury, *for the seven trumpets.* Rhythmically, the most characteristic piece in the series. The four instruments in unison take on the aspect of gongs and trumpets (the first six trumpets of the Apocalypse were followed by various catastrophes, the trumpet of the seventh angel announced the consummation of the mystery of God). Use of added values, rhythms augmented or diminished... Music of stone, of formidable, sonorous granite...

A mingling of rainbows, *for the Angel who announces the end of Time*. Certain passages from the second movement recur here. The powerful angel appears, above all the rainbow that covers him... In my dreams I hear and see a catalogue of chords and melodies, familiar colours and forms... The swords of fire, these outpourings of blue-orange lava, these turbulent stars...

Praise to the Immortality of Jesus. Expansive solo violin, counterpart to the violoncello solo of the fifth movement. Why this second encomium? It addresses more specifically the second aspect of Jesus, Jesus the Man, the Word made flesh... Its slow ascent toward the most extreme point of tension is the ascension of man toward his God, of the child of God toward his Father, of the being made divine toward Paradise.

In the *Quartet for the End of Time*, Messiaen transforms extreme limitation into boundless imagination. Composed in captivity, the work does not dwell on suffering, but instead offers a vision of transcendence—music that suspends time even as it unfolds within it, inviting the listener into a space of stillness, wonder, and profound spiritual depth.

WEEKEND 2

Brave New World

SATURDAY, JULY 18 | 3 PM

JO LONG THEATRE, CARVER COMMUNITY CENTER | SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

This production is not a presentation of the Carver Community Cultural Center or the Carver Development Board.

> *Classical music encounters new sounds, new rhythms, and new possibilities.*
>
> *This program explores the moment when classical music opened itself to new influences—particularly the rhythms and energy of jazz and ragtime. Milhaud's La création du monde stands at the forefront of this encounter, blending classical form with jazz language. William Grant Still's music brings an authentically American voice shaped by those same traditions. The second half turns to ragtime itself—the source—revealing the roots of a musical revolution that would reshape both jazz and classical music. The horizon here is one of expansion: new sounds, new identities, and new possibilities.*

DARIUS MILHAUD (1892–1974)

Suite from *La création du monde* (The Creation of the World) for piano and string quartet, Op. 81b (1923)

Darius Milhaud (1892–1974) was one of the most prolific and stylistically adventurous composers of the 20th century. Born in Aix-en-Provence into a Jewish family, he grew up surrounded by a rich and varied sound world—from Provençal folk songs to the layered hum of his family's almond business, experiences he later connected to his fondness for dense textures and polytonality. After studies at the Paris Conservatory, he became associated with the group known as *Les Six*, a loose circle of composers seeking to refresh French music with new artistic perspectives. Milhaud's musical imagination was shaped by travel and cultural encounter—from Brazil to Paris to New York—but also by the upheavals of his time. As a Jewish artist in Europe, he was forced to flee France during World War II, eventually settling in the United States, where he became an influential teacher and an important bridge between European modernism and American musical life. Milhaud taught a staggeringly diverse array of students, including Burt Bacharach, William Bolcom, Dave Brubeck, Pierre Max Dubois, Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Morton Subotnick, and Iannis Xenakis.

La création du monde (The Creation of the World), Op. 81, composed in 1923 for Rolf de Maré's Ballets Suédois, represents one of the earliest and most compelling syntheses of jazz and classical traditions. With a scenario by Blaise Cendrars based on African creation myths and designs by Fernand Léger, the ballet traces a stylized creation story—from primordial

chaos to the emergence of life and the union of man and woman. Milhaud drew directly on the instrumentation and sound of the jazz ensembles he had encountered—first in London in 1920, then more intensively in Harlem in 1922—incorporating syncopation, blues inflections, and layered rhythmic textures into a tightly constructed score. As Leonard Bernstein observed, the work stands "not as a flirtation but as a real love affair with jazz," while Dave Brubeck called it "the first and remains the best jazz piece from a classical European composer."

The suite heard tonight, Op. 81b, is Milhaud's own arrangement of the ballet for piano and string quartet. In this more intimate form, the work's contrapuntal ingenuity and rhythmic vitality come into especially sharp focus. Remarkably, it opens with what might be described as a jazz-inflected prelude and fugue—Baroque form refracted through the syncopated language of early jazz and ragtime. Blues-inflected melodies, offbeat accents, and layered rhythmic patterns evoke the energy of Harlem while remaining carefully structured. Throughout the suite, Milhaud juxtaposes rhapsodic lyricism with percussive drive, playful dance rhythms with moments of introspection. One hears echoes of ragtime in the jaunty rhythms and "blue notes," alongside passages of suave lyricism that seem to grow naturally out of the jazz idiom.

Milhaud himself described this work as making "wholesale use of the jazz style to convey a purely classical feeling," and that balance is central to its character. The music follows the arc of the ballet—from chaos through creation to human connection—while continually blending influences that, at the time, were still considered worlds apart. Jazz and ragtime offered Milhaud not only new sounds but new ways of thinking about rhythm, color, and form. The result is a work that feels at once exuberant and sophisticated: a landmark in the early encounter between American popular music and European modernism, and a vivid reminder of a moment when artistic boundaries were rapidly expanding.

WILLIAM GRANT STILL (1895–1978)

Suite for violin and piano (1943)

William Grant Still (1895–1978) stands as a central figure in American music of the 20th century and a leading voice of the Harlem Renaissance. The grandson of enslaved people, Still was trained in both classical and popular traditions, studying at Oberlin and later with Edgard Varèse. His career moved fluidly between worlds: he worked as an arranger for blues and early jazz musicians, wrote for radio and film, and composed symphonies, operas, and chamber music that sought to define a distinctly American classical voice. Deeply committed to representing African American cultural identity with dignity and authenticity, Still drew on the language of blues, spirituals, and popular music—not as surface color, but as the foundation of his musical expression.

Composed in 1943, the **Suite for Violin and Piano** reflects this artistic vision with particular clarity. Still described its inspiration simply: he wished "to catch in music [his] feeling for an outstanding work" by three contemporary Black artists associated with the Harlem Renaissance. Each movement responds to a different sculpture, translating visual form into musical gesture while maintaining a clear, three-movement classical structure. Throughout the suite, blues inflections, jazz rhythms, and subtle syncopations animate

the musical surface, bringing the sounds of American vernacular music into the concert hall with elegance and immediacy.

The opening movement, *African Dancer*, is inspired by a sculpture of that name by Richmond Barthé. Its music is urgent, rhythmic, and kinetic, capturing the sense of motion and physical vitality suggested by the figure. Shifting tempos and sharply etched gestures evoke the spontaneity of dance, while the melodic language—inflected with "blue notes" and flexible phrasing—draws unmistakably on blues and jazz traditions. The result is music that feels both composed and improvisatory, channeling the energy of movement through a classical lens.

The second movement, *Mother and Child*, offers a striking contrast. Inspired by a number of paintings and sculptures of the same name by Sargent Johnson, it unfolds as a lyrical, lullaby-like meditation. Gentle rocking rhythms and a warm, singing melodic line create an atmosphere of intimacy and reflection, while subtle shifts between major and minor recall the expressive ambiguity of the blues. Beneath its apparent simplicity lies a deeply nuanced emotional world—one that captures tenderness, protection, and quiet strength. Still later arranged this movement separately, and it has become one of his most beloved works.

The final movement, *Gamin*, takes its cue from sculptor Augusta Savage's bust of a young boy. Playful, quick-witted, and full of character, the music evokes the mischievous spirit of its subject. Here, jazz and ragtime influences come most clearly to the fore: syncopated rhythms, buoyant accents, and blues-tinged melodies give the movement a sense of spontaneity and charm. The suite closes with a lightness of touch that belies its careful craftsmanship, leaving the impression of music that is at once joyful, personal, and deeply rooted in American musical life.

In the Suite for Violin and Piano, Still achieves a seamless fusion of traditions. Classical forms provide the framework, but the expressive heart of the music lies in the language of blues and jazz—sounds that, in Still's hands, become vehicles for both artistic innovation and cultural affirmation.

RAGTIME: AN AMERICAN SOUND

Ragtime is one of the first distinctly American musical languages—a style rooted in African American musical traditions that flourished from the mid-1890s through the First World War. It emerged at a moment when the United States was rapidly urbanizing and developing a shared popular culture, and it became one of the first musical styles to circulate nationally through mass publication. Before recordings were widely available, the piano stood at the center of musical life in many homes, and ragtime quickly became a national craze. Its syncopated rhythms, irresistible energy, and memorable melodies spread across the country through sheet music, transforming what had once been a largely improvised performance tradition into one of America's first truly national musical styles.

Its defining feature is syncopation: a "ragged" rhythmic style in which melodic accents fall between the expected beats. In its most familiar form, the pianist's left hand keeps a steady, march-like pulse while the right hand dances freely above it in off-beat patterns that seem to tug delightfully against the beat. The effect is infectious. Gunther Schuller—composer, conductor, jazz historian, and founder of the New England Ragtime Ensemble—used to say that you simply cannot hear ragtime without wanting to tap your feet. Audiences should feel entirely free to do exactly that.

Although we now think of ragtime mainly as piano music, the term originally described a broader world of song, dance, and instrumental performance. The style grew out of the lived musical culture of African American communities in the decades following the Civil War, shaped by musicians performing in saloons, clubs, theaters, and social gatherings across the Midwest—especially in cities like Sedalia and St. Louis. These musicians drew on a remarkable range of influences: banjo traditions, work songs and spirituals, the rhythms of the cakewalk and other social dances, and deep-rooted African rhythmic practices in which syncopation and layered rhythmic patterns play a central role. At the same time, ragtime absorbed elements of European musical structure, particularly the march forms popularized by composers such as John Philip Sousa. In fact, many classic rags use the same multi-strain structure as Sousa marches: a succession of contrasting themes unfolding one after another. But ragtime transformed those forms through rhythm. The result was music that sounded at once familiar and startlingly new.

At the center of ragtime's rise stands **Scott Joplin (1868–1917)**, whose *Maple Leaf Rag* (1899) helped define the style and brought it decisively into the American mainstream. Joplin possessed an almost astonishing melodic fertility. Schuller often marveled at the sheer number of memorable tunes Joplin produced: three or more fully formed themes in nearly every rag, multiplied across hundreds of works. He liked to joke that even composers such as Dvořák or Tchaikovsky would have struggled to match that torrent of melody. Yet Joplin's ambitions extended beyond popular entertainment. In his opera *Treemonisha* (1911), he sought to bring African American musical language onto the operatic stage in a serious and unprecedented way—a visionary work that today is recognized as a landmark in American music history.

Alongside Joplin are **James Scott (1885–1938)**, **James Reese Europe (1880–1919)**, and **Artie Matthews (1888–1958)**, often grouped among the leading voices of classic ragtime. Other important figures include **Tom Turpin (1871–1922)**, an early pioneer of the genre, and **Eubie Blake (1887–1983)**, whose long career helped carry ragtime's spirit into the emerging world of jazz. James Reese Europe, in particular, played a major role in bringing ragtime's syncopated energy into larger ensembles and military bands, helping spread its sound to still wider audiences.

Ragtime's influence reaches far beyond its own era. In many ways, it laid the groundwork for jazz itself. Early jazz musicians emerged directly from the ragtime tradition, among them **Jelly Roll Morton (1885–1941)**, who famously described jazz as "ragtime with a little more swing." In Morton's music, we can hear the transition from the composed, carefully notated world of ragtime to the more flexible, improvisatory language of jazz.

At the same time, ragtime's rhythmic vitality and distinctive sound captivated classical composers. Igor Stravinsky incorporated ragtime gestures into works such as *L'Histoire du soldat*; Maurice Ravel drew on its syncopations and blues inflections; and Darius Milhaud embraced its energy as part of his broader fascination with jazz. In the United States, composers such as William Grant Still absorbed ragtime, blues, and jazz into a distinctly American classical voice. The boundaries between "popular" and "classical" music suddenly became far more fluid.

The ragtime sets on this afternoon's program offer a glimpse of the style at its source: music that is elegant, exuberant, witty, and rhythmically alive. In the works that surround these sets, we hear how that same rhythmic language opened entirely new possibilities across musical worlds. What began in local communities as a living, evolving tradition became one of the defining forces in the sound of the twentieth century.

Cactus Pear MUSIC FESTIVAL

WEEKEND 2

Riches to Rags

SUNDAY, JULY 19 | 3 PM

JO LONG THEATRE, CARVER COMMUNITY CENTER | SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

This production is not a presentation of the Carver Community Cultural Center or the Carver Development Board.

A playful and illuminating dialogue between refinement and revolution.

The festival's closing program brings the journey full circle. Stravinsky and Ravel each engage with popular idioms—ragtime, jazz, and blues—transforming them through a classical lens. Their works reveal not imitation, but fascination: a reimagining of rhythm, gesture, and musical character. The final ragtime set returns us to the source, completing the arc from tradition to transformation and back again. In this reversal—Riches to Rags—we hear not a descent, but a rediscovery of origins.

IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882–1971)

Suite from *L'Histoire du soldat* (The Soldier's Tale) for clarinet, violin, and piano (1918; arr. 1919)

Igor Stravinsky and his family spent the years of World War I in self-imposed exile in Switzerland, cut off from his usual sources of income and support. Payments from his German publishers were delayed, the Russian Revolution severed his access to family resources, and his primary collaborator, Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, was effectively out of reach. Faced with mounting financial pressure, Stravinsky responded with characteristic pragmatism. Together with the Swiss writer Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz and conductor Ernest Ansermet, he devised a plan for what he called "a sort of little traveling theater, easy to transport from place to place and to show in even small localities."

The result was *L'Histoire du soldat*, a work "to be read, played, and danced," combining narration, acting, and music in a highly economical format. Drawing on a Russian folk tale collected by Alexander Afanasyev, the story tells of a soldier who trades his violin to the devil in exchange for a magical book that predicts the future—a bargain that brings wealth but ultimately costs him his freedom. Like the Faust legend it echoes, the tale unfolds as a parable of temptation, loss, and the impossibility of reclaiming what has been given away.

Stravinsky's score reflects the same spirit of ingenuity and restraint that shaped the work's conception. Instead of the large orchestras of *The Firebird, Petrushka,* or *The Rite of Spring*, he wrote for a sharply defined ensemble of seven instruments—violin, double bass, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, trombone, and percussion—each representing a different register and timbral family. At the same time, he deliberately moved away from overt "Russianness,"

incorporating instead a cosmopolitan mix of popular dance forms, including tango, waltz, and ragtime. Stravinsky had encountered jazz primarily through sheet music rather than live performance, later remarking that he borrowed its rhythmic style "not as played, but as written." The result is a lean, biting musical language—dry, ironic, and rhythmically driven, propelled by sharply accented patterns, obsessive ostinatos, and dissonances that crackle within an otherwise clear tonal framework.

The work was premiered on September 28, 1918, in Lausanne, Switzerland, under Ansermet's direction. The production was made possible by the Swiss philanthropist and amateur clarinetist Werner Reinhart, who financed the entire venture. Although the premiere was well received, the project's practical aims were quickly thwarted: a severe influenza epidemic swept through Switzerland, forcing the closure of theaters and bringing any plans for a touring production to an abrupt halt.

In gratitude to Reinhart, and also in keeping with the work's practical origins, Stravinsky arranged a suite of five movements for violin, clarinet, and piano. This version, first performed in Lausanne in 1919 with Reinhart himself playing the clarinet, distills the theatrical score into a set of sharply etched musical scenes. Freed from the narrative framework, the music takes on a new life as chamber music—its characters suggested through gesture, rhythm, and timbre rather than text.

In this trio form, *L'Histoire du soldat* reveals itself with particular clarity: spare, incisive, and unmistakably modern. What began as a pragmatic solution to financial hardship became one of Stravinsky's most original creations—a work that strips music down to its essentials while opening up an entirely new expressive world.

MAURICE RAVEL (1875–1937)

Violin Sonata no. 2 in G Major (1923–27)

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) was one of the great musical craftsmen of the early 20th century, celebrated for his precision, clarity, and extraordinary sensitivity to instrumental color. Born in Ciboure and trained at the Paris Conservatoire with Gabriel Fauré, Ravel developed a style often associated with Impressionism but grounded in meticulous structural control. The Violin Sonata No. 2 in G major, composed between 1923 and 1927, was his final major chamber work and emerged only after a prolonged period of creative difficulty. Plagued by exhaustion and depression—what he himself called *"cafard"*—Ravel struggled to complete the piece, setting it aside more than once before finally finishing it under the pressure of an announced premiere date. The sonata was dedicated to the violinist Hélène Jourdan-Morhange, a close friend and collaborator, though illness prevented her from performing it; the premiere in 1927 was instead given by George Enescu with Ravel at the piano.

Ravel approached the pairing of violin and piano with unusual frankness, describing them as "essentially incompatible instruments." Rather than blending their sounds, he chose to emphasize their differences, crafting a work in which each part remains independent and distinct. The result is a texture of remarkable clarity and restraint, where dialogue replaces fusion and contrast becomes the organizing principle. The first movement *(Allegretto)* unfolds

with spare, linear writing: long, sinuous violin lines hover above a piano part that is at times percussive, at times skeletal, often reduced to bare intervals. The music's tonal center feels fluid and elusive, and its expressive world—though elegant—carries an undercurrent of unease.

The second movement, *Blues*, forms the expressive and conceptual heart of the sonata. Its title refers not only to American jazz idioms but also to the emotional state Ravel associated with the word—the melancholy of the "blue devils," or *idées noires*, that haunted him during the work's composition. Drawing on the jazz sounds that had begun to circulate widely in Paris in the 1920s, Ravel incorporates syncopation, "blue" notes, sliding violin gestures, and banjo-like pizzicato effects into a highly stylized musical language. As he himself insisted, these elements are not imitations but materials, transformed through his own refined harmonic and textural sensibility. The movement balances wit and introspection, its surface charm shadowed by something more inward and searching.

The finale, *Perpetuum mobile*, brings the sonata to a dazzling and restless conclusion. After struggling with earlier versions, Ravel ultimately discarded a complete draft of the movement and replaced it with the brilliant, continuous motion we hear today. The violin launches into an almost unbroken stream of rapid figuration, pushing the instrument to the limits of its virtuosity, while the piano provides rhythmic propulsion and recalls fragments from earlier movements. The effect is both exhilarating and hypnotic—a relentless forward drive that resolves only at the very end.

In this sonata, Ravel transforms limitation into principle. The "incompatibility" of violin and piano becomes the source of the work's vitality, while the fusion of classical clarity, modernist restraint, and jazz influence yields a work of striking originality. Elegant, austere, and quietly expressive, the Violin Sonata No. 2 stands as a distilled statement of Ravel's late style—music in which every gesture is essential, and every contrast meaningful.

RAGTIME: AN AMERICAN SOUND

If you played the piano as a kid, chances are good that at some point you played *The Entertainer*, the most famous ragtime piece in the world. Its catchy tunes and bright, bouncy piano sound can't help but bring a smile to your face, whether you are 10 or 80. It's music that's fun to play and that makes you want to dance. For generations of young pianists, it has been strong motivation to practice. Chances are also good that when you played *The Entertainer*, you had no idea this was only one rag of thousands that were written around the turn of the century; that ragtime was the mother, if you will, of jazz; and that you were participating in one of the many great music genres created by Black Americans. *The Entertainer* is only the tip of a much larger musical world.

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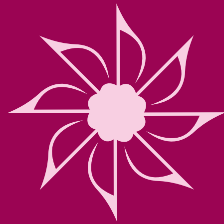

Cactus Pear

MUSIC FESTIVAL

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