

29 AND COUNTING

This summer, Cactus Pear Music Festival celebrates its 29th season with a title that says it all: *29 and Counting*. It's a nod to our longevity, and to the milestone just ahead—but also to the heartbeat of chamber music itself. Chamber music lives in the count: the toe-tapping energy, the shared downbeat, the exhilarating interplay of musicians perfectly in sync. Sustained by years of unforgettable performances, meaningful connections, and a community that keeps showing up, we're not just looking back—we're still playing, still counting, and after all this time, we haven't missed a beat.

SAN ANTONIO & BLANCO, TX
JULY 11-20, 2025

Cactus Pear Music Festival



AND COUNTING

cpmf.us



COUNT ON IT

FRIDAY | JULY 11, 7:30 PM

BLANCO PERFORMING ARTS | BLANCO, TX

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

In a world that often feels unpredictable, some things are worth relying on: the power of great music, the chemistry of outstanding musicians, the welcoming embrace of a good concert hall. This co-presentation by Blanco Performing Arts and Cactus Pear Music Festival brings together two organizations with a shared commitment to musical excellence, thoughtful programming, and community connection. We're delighted to join forces for an evening of chamber music you can count on—beautifully crafted, richly expressive, and deeply rewarding.

Franz Peter Schubert

(1797–1828)

Piano Trio in E-flat Major, D. 929

Composed 1827 | Vienna, Austria

In the fall of 1827, Franz Schubert composed two of the greatest works in the piano trio repertoire: the lyrical *Trio in B-flat Major*, D. 898, and the more expansive *Trio in E-flat Major*, D. 929. Contemporary audiences often favor the charm and relative concision of the B-flat Trio, while critics have sometimes found the E-flat Trio unwieldy in length. But in the 19th century, it was quite the opposite. Robert Schumann praised the E-flat Trio as “spirited, masculine, and dramatic,” preferring it to its companion. The truth is that both are radiant masterpieces—intimate and expansive, lyrical and searching—by a composer only thirty years old and at

the height of his powers.

And that power was hard-won. At the time of writing, Schubert was battling illness, financial uncertainty, and a sense of artistic isolation. He had recently suffered the death of Beethoven—his musical hero—and knew that his own health was declining. Yet 1827–28 proved to be the most astonishingly productive period of his life, yielding not only the two piano trios but also the F minor Fantasy for piano four-hands, *Winterreise*, *Schwanengesang*, the last three piano sonatas, the sublime *String Quintet in C Major*, and so much more.

Schubert himself regarded the trio highly enough that he chose it as the

centerpiece of the only public concert devoted entirely to his music during his lifetime. Held at Vienna’s Musikverein on December 26, 1827, the concert was organized by a circle of friends and was received with genuine enthusiasm—an all-too-rare moment of recognition for Schubert. The trio was also the only one of his works to be published beyond Austria while he was still alive.

The first movement begins boldly, with all three instruments stating the opening motive in unison—a commanding gesture that launches a sonata form filled with drama, warmth, and contrapuntal richness. Schubert’s lyricism is always close at hand, but here it’s tempered by drive and direction. Still, the music never rushes. As critic James Keller notes, Schubert rarely gives the impression of being in a hurry. Schumann famously described Schubert’s music as being of “heavenly length”—not to suggest bloat, but rather a kind of suspended time in which ideas blossom slowly and fully.

The second movement is widely considered one of Schubert’s most sublime creations: a somber, impassioned “song without words.” In fact, the music is rooted in a literal song. Schubert’s friend Leopold Sonnleithner claimed the melody was inspired by the Swedish folksong *Se solen sjunker* (“The Sun Has Set”), which Schubert heard at a recital earlier that year. Though the claim was long dismissed, musicologist Manfred Willfort rediscovered the song in 1978, confirming its striking resemblance. Schubert didn’t quote the song

directly, but its octave leaps and its tread-like accompaniment became the foundation for a movement of quiet gravity and expressive depth—one that seems to meditate on loss, remembrance, and the fading of light.

The scherzo that follows is tightly constructed, rhythmically agile, and full of contrapuntal wit. Its trio section offers welcome repose, but the canonic interplay in the outer sections keeps the momentum crisp. The final movement is vast—nearly 850 measures—and unusually free in form. But the scale is purposeful: a broad, rhapsodic landscape where themes are introduced, developed, revisited, and transformed. Chief among them is the Swedish-inspired theme from the second movement, which is transformed near the end of the movement in a luminous major key. This final statement lends the work a sense of catharsis—an emotional release that feels both intimate and transcendent.

Though rooted in classical structures, Schubert’s approach is unmistakably his own. He stretches traditional forms not for effect, but because his lyricism demands it. His music unfolds like a journey without a fixed destination—one that invites you to follow its path without expectation, discovering beauties both grand and intimate along the way. This trio offers clarity, depth, and emotional truth spanning memory, loss, joy, and renewal.

Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770–1827)

String Quintet in C Major, Op. 29

for two violins, two violas, and cello
Composed 1801 | Vienna, Austria

The works of Ludwig van Beethoven are perhaps the best-known and most often performed music in the classical tradition. His thirty-two piano sonatas, eighteen string quartets, and nine symphonies are cornerstones of the Western canon—so foundational, in fact, that they became the genres by which future composers would be measured. With rare exceptions—Schubert, most notably—it's not until Liszt that we encounter a piano sonata on the level of Beethoven's; not until Brahms that the symphony reaches comparable stature; and, dare we say it, not even Bartók or Shostakovich surpass him in the string quartet.

But Beethoven's artistic legacy extends well beyond these pillars. He also made extraordinary contributions to the sonata for violin and piano, the sonata for cello and piano—a genre he essentially invented—the piano trio, and even opera. Yet his enormous success in traditional and commercially viable forms can sometimes overshadow his forays into more unusual or “experimental”

genres. Beethoven wrote dozens of works in these “experimental” genres that are less frequently performed but no less revealing of his inventiveness and spirit. Among these is his only original, full-length string quintet: the *String Quintet in C Major, Op. 29*, composed in 1801.

Written on the cusp of his so-called “middle period,” this work mostly looks back toward Haydn and Mozart rather than forward to the bold new path Beethoven would soon blaze. The instrumentation—two violins, two violas, and cello—mirrors that of Mozart's own quintets and allows for an especially rich middle texture. The work is sometimes nicknamed “The Storm” for its finale: murmuring tremolos suggest distant thunder, while rapid violin figures evoke flashes of lightning. But this is no tempest on the scale of Beethoven's later symphonic storms. It is a storm in classical proportions, more reminiscent of Haydn's *The Seasons*—dramatic, certainly, but tightly structured and ultimately decorous.

Some scholars have speculated that this more conservative approach reflects Beethoven's personal situation at the time. Around 1801, he was beginning to accept that his hearing loss was not temporary, but permanent—a terrifying realization

for a composer. Perhaps this quintet represents a brief retreat to familiar terrain before he forged ahead with the bold, emotionally charged works that would define his middle period.

In the opening movement of the quintet, Beethoven crafts a spacious musical landscape where flowing themes and delicate textures evoke both intimacy and grandeur. The second movement, *Adagio molto espressivo*, is poised and inward, unfolding a long, singing line over restrained accompaniment—a striking contrast to the extroverted outer movements. The third movement, an unstoppable Scherzo, features rhythmic play and interplay among the parts that showcase Beethoven's delight in musical wit and conversational dialogue. The finale, “The Storm,” sizzles with energy.

The quintet was dedicated to Count Moritz von Fries, a generous patron who also received the dedications of Beethoven's Violin Sonatas Op. 23 and 24. A long and tangled copyright dispute followed when Fries, believing (correctly) that he had the right to do so, sold the work to the publisher Artaria—unaware that Beethoven had already arranged to publish it with Breitkopf. The result was a tangle of conflicting claims, two competing editions, and Beethoven's public accusation that Artaria's edition was riddled with errors. The matter was

eventually resolved, thanks again to Fries, who negotiated a compromise: Beethoven would write a second quintet to be published solely by Artaria. That second quintet, however, never materialized.

Thus, the Op. 29 Quintet remains unique in Beethoven's output. His earlier Op. 4 quintet is a reworking of his Octet for winds, and Op. 104 is an arrangement of a piano trio, revised by a student and lightly edited by Beethoven. A brief fugue (Op. 137) and an unfinished late fragment (WoO 62, believed to be Beethoven's last work) round out his sparse contributions to the string quintet genre. One wonders: had he completed that final quintet, would he have redefined the genre as he had the quartet? We'll never know. But in the year following Beethoven's death, Franz Schubert—himself in the final year of his life—would do exactly that with his own *String Quintet in C Major*, a pinnacle of the chamber music repertoire.

This quintet invites us to rediscover a quieter corner of Beethoven's genius. It may not blaze with the defiance of his symphonies or the intensity of his later quartets, but it offers something just as essential: music you can count on to be elegant, expressive, and deeply moving.

IT'S THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS

SATURDAY | JULY 12, 3 PM

UIW | DIANE BENNACK HALL, SAN ANTONIO

Sometimes a quiet gesture says the most. It's the Thought That Counts explores the idea that intention—whether in composition, character, or artistic form—can carry deep meaning. Each piece on this program reflects a composer's thoughtful voice: through reflection, resilience, subtlety, or wry humor. From bluesy introspection to understated elegance, from daring invention to quiet rebellion, these works invite us to listen closely—not for grandiosity, but for depth.

William Grant Still

(1895–1978)

Blues from Lennox Avenue

for violin & piano

Composed 1955 | Los Angeles, CA

Often referred to as the “Dean of African American Composers,” William Grant Still had an extraordinary ability to blend the language of concert music with the rich idioms of jazz, blues, and spirituals. A composer who found lyricism in everyday life, Still treated even his lightest miniatures with a sense of dignity and expressive care. *Blues from Lennox Avenue* is one such piece—originally part of a suite for chamber ensemble evoking scenes from Harlem, and here arranged for violin and piano.

The title references one of Harlem's

most iconic boulevards—now Malcolm X Boulevard—which was a cultural epicenter of the Harlem Renaissance. Still's music captures the feel of a slow evening walk: the violin sighs and slides, gently bending the blues phrases, while the piano provides a spare, steady accompaniment that pulses like city air after dark. The restraint in the writing is part of its power. Rather than dramatize, Still offers something closer to memory—subtle, wistful, unhurried.

Quit Dat Fool'nish

for violin & piano

Composed 1935 | Los Angeles, CA

This brief but brilliant character piece shows William Grant Still in high spirits. Originally written for solo piano, *Quit Dat Fool'nish* is all rhythmic sass and melodic sparkle, often played today in this violin and piano version. It's

music with a wink: the piano struts and swings with stride-inflected patterns, while the violin zips and teases with cheerful irreverence.

Still had a gift for miniatures that feel fully realized. These musical sketches aren't casual toss-offs—they're precise in their timing, elegant in their craft, and generous in their energy. In this piece, the artistry is in knowing exactly how far to lean into the joke, how long to hold the smile. It's a different kind of intelligence: musical thoughtfulness in the form of wit. There's no sermon here—just an invitation to share a laugh and admire the composer's deft touch.

Jennifer Higdon

(b. 1962)

Nocturne

for cello & piano

Composed 2006 | United States

Jennifer Higdon came late to formal music study—she didn't begin playing an instrument until age 15—but she rose swiftly to become one of America's most celebrated living composers. Her music is known for its accessibility, warmth, and direct emotional appeal. Yet even her most approachable works are marked by an internal discipline, a keen ear for balance and detail, and a careful consideration of expressive weight.

Composed in 2006, *Nocturne* for cello and piano is a small, deeply introspective work. There's nothing flashy or programmatic here. Instead, the music unfolds in long, singing lines—melodies that drift gently, like thoughts before sleep. The piano offers luminous, understated support, allowing the cello to speak in a voice both intimate and steady. Higdon avoids excess; everything feels placed with care. This restraint is not a limit, but a strength. It's the kind of music that highlights the artistry of thoughtful gestures: a shape, a color, a pause. Nothing demands attention, and yet everything holds it.

Rebecca Clarke

(b. 1962)

Sonata

for viola & piano

Composed 1919 | Lenox, MA

Rebecca Clarke received a single-line entry in the 1980 *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* as “the viola-playing wife of composer and pianist James Friskin.” Today, Clarke's standing has decisively changed. She is now recognized as one of the most original voices in early twentieth-century British music, while Friskin is largely forgotten. Born in England to a German mother and American father, Clarke spent much of her adult

life in the United States. Her early biography is marked by challenges: a turbulent childhood, estrangement from her family, and the need to support herself through professional viola performance. She became one of the first women to play in a fully professional orchestra, and she performed chamber music regularly with many of the leading musicians of her time, including Myra Hess, Pablo Casals, Artur Schnabel, and Joseph Szigeti.

In 1919, while living in the U.S., Clarke submitted her *Viola Sonata* anonymously to a composition competition sponsored by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. Out of 72 entries, the sonata tied for first with **Ernest Bloch's Suite for Viola and Piano**, itself a masterpiece of the repertoire. Coolidge ultimately broke the tie in Bloch's favor, but the panel—deeply impressed by the sonata's sweep and craftsmanship—demanded to have the composer of the sonata revealed. All were astonished to learn the composer was a woman.

Clarke's musical voice in this work is sophisticated, emotionally rich, and structurally assured: the first movement combines lyrical intensity with tonal ambiguity and bold

harmonic shifts; the second is a puckish scherzo, angular and fleet; and the finale moves from inward contemplation to radiant, full-voiced affirmation. Her language blends elements of Debussy's harmonic color, Franck's motivic cohesion, and the expressive fervor of Bloch, yet her voice remains distinct—marked by modal inflections, clean lines, and an unmistakable English restraint.

That the piece was judged anonymously is telling: only behind a veil could it be fully recognized on its own terms. In the end, the music stood—and still stands—on its own thoughtful strength.

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COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

SUNDAY | JULY 13, 3 PM

UIW | DIANE BENNACK HALL, SAN ANTONIO

*Gratitude takes many forms—a quiet reflection, a burst of laughter, a song shared among friends. **Count Your Blessings** is a concert that invites us to notice what we carry, what we celebrate, and what we remember. Each work on this program offers its own kind of benediction: music shaped by care, lifted by joy, or anchored in deep feeling. There are no grand narratives here, only moments of generosity and grace—a chance to listen closely and come away more aware of what matters most.*

William Grant Still

(1895–1978)

Summerland

for violin & piano

Composed 1935 | United States

Summerland, arranged for violin and piano from Still's original solo piano version, is a piece of quiet radiance. It comes from *Three Visions* (1935), a set depicting the soul's journey after death. In *Summerland*, the soul reaches a state of peace—not a conventional heaven, but a glowing, tranquil place beyond pain and striving.

The violin's long, singing lines and the piano's luminous harmonies work together to evoke timelessness. Nothing rushes. Still allows the music to breathe, and in doing so, invites

the listener into a shared moment of calm reflection. This is music that offers beauty without insistence—a benediction in sound, and a reminder that grace is worth lingering over.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

(1756–1791)

Piano Concerto No. 13 in C Major, K. 415

for piano and string quartet

Composed 1782 | Vienna, Austria

Mozart composed his Piano Concerto in C Major, K. 415 in the final months of 1782, shortly after relocating to Vienna and launching a new life as a freelance artist. It is the third in a group of three concertos—alongside K. 413 and K. 414—that he offered by subscription for the upcoming concert season. These works were designed to appeal

both to connoisseurs and casual music lovers, and Mozart took great pride in their accessibility and craftsmanship. “These concertos,” he wrote to his father, “are a happy medium between too difficult and too easy... very brilliant, pleasing to the ear and natural, without being vapid.” It’s a remarkably accurate description of a work that balances polish, virtuosity, and emotional depth with the deceptive ease of true mastery.

Mozart also noted that these concertos could be performed with either a full orchestra or “a quattro”—that is, with a string quartet accompanying the piano. This was more than a stylistic curiosity; it was a savvy marketing move. By publishing and promoting the works in this flexible format, Mozart made them more appealing to amateur musicians and smaller private salons where hiring an orchestra was impractical. The “a quattro” version expanded his potential customer base and performance venues, ensuring that the concertos could be enjoyed in both public concerts and domestic settings. It’s chamber music with concert flair—and concert music with chamber intimacy.

Today’s performance uses this more intimate version, revealing the chamber-music soul at the heart of the piece. With just four string players and piano, the concerto becomes a conversation among equals: nimble, transparent, and full of character.

The first movement, *Allegro*, opens with bold, confident gestures, but its main theme is quietly intriguing—built on imitative, contrapuntal lines that wind around one another in a way that’s somewhat unusual for Mozart. From the start, we sense a balance between grandeur and intricacy, extroversion and intellect. The piano writing is brilliant and athletic, filled with cascading scales and deft filigree, but it’s not mere display: the dialogue between soloist and quartet is dynamic, balanced, and full of elegant surprises.

The second movement, *Andante*, offers contrast through restraint. This music sings—graceful, poised, and inward-looking. Its aria-like melody unfolds with quiet clarity, and in the quartet version especially, the movement takes on the intimacy of a private confession or a lullaby spoken just above a whisper. It’s a musical expression of serenity that doesn’t seek to dazzle so much as to reassure.

The finale, *Rondo: Allegro*, is buoyant and irrepressible—until it’s not. Mozart’s main rondo theme is cheerful and skipping, full of charm and rhythmic vitality. But the episodes between its returns include two passages of surprising introspection, where the music slows, deepens, and searches more inwardly before springing back into motion. These episodes lend the movement unexpected weight and emotional shading, as if joy and reflection were two sides of the same coin. The result

is a finale that’s not only witty and brilliant, but genuinely moving.

Joaquín Turina (1882–1949)

Scène andalouse, Op. 7

for viola, piano, and string quartet

Composed 1911 | Paris, France

In the late-19th and early-20th century, Spanish music began to emerge as a major voice in European concert life as the music of Isaac Albeniz and Enrique Granados appeared on concerts and won hearts and minds. That trend continued with Joaquín Turina and his friend and compatriot Manuel de Falla, among the younger composers who brought Spanish music into dialogue with the modern trends of fin-de-siècle Paris.

Turina moved to Paris in 1905 to study piano with Moritz Moszkowski and composition with Vincent d’Indy at the Schola Cantorum, a bastion of rigorous, Franckian musical thought. His early works, like the *Piano Quintet* Op. 1, followed that French model closely. But a transformative moment came in 1907, when both Albéniz and Falla attended a performance of that quintet and encouraged Turina to look closer to home—not to Paris—for inspiration. Turina recalled that night as a turning point: “We were three Spaniards gathered together in that corner of Paris, and it was our duty to fight bravely for the national music of our country.”

The result was a shift in musical voice that blossomed in works like *Scène andalouse* (Escena andaluza), composed in 1911 and premiered that December in Paris by violist Lise Blinoff, the all-female Leroux-Reboul Quartet, and Turina himself at the piano. The work is scored for viola, piano, and string quartet, a rich and rarely used combination that allows for lush texture and intimate drama. The ensemble closely echoes that of Ernest Chausson’s Concert for violin, piano, and string quartet—a work Turina likely encountered during his Paris years, and whose unusual instrumentation may have inspired his own choice. While unmistakably Spanish in character, *Scène andalouse* still bears the imprint of Turina’s Paris training—particularly in its cyclical form and refined use of instrumental color.

The piece is cast in two movements, each a kind of musical tableau evoking a different moment in an Andalusian evening. The first, *Crépuscule du soir* (Evening Twilight), opens with a lyrical and rhythmically ambiguous piano solo—music that hints at flamenco through its sinuous lines and ornamented gestures. The viola enters like a cantaor, the flamenco singer, introducing a theme filled with Andalusian flavor, including the augmented second, a hallmark of local folk music with deep Moorish roots. The string quartet gradually joins in, expanding the musical texture with pizzicato and strummed effects that recall the Spanish guitar. A short cello bridge leads into the Serenata, where the viola offers arpeggiated, guitar-like figures and lyrical melodies. At its

heart is a habanera—a lilting, dance-like section of Cuban origin that had become absorbed into the Spanish musical imagination. The serenade eventually returns, bringing this first “scene” to a quiet, romantic close.

The second movement, *À la fenêtre* (At the Window), serves as both response and reflection. The piano and string quartet open with a new theme, derived from the material that opened the first movement, establishing a continuity between scenes. The viola replies with a modally inflected, waltz-like melody, full of expressive warmth. The central section revisits and transforms earlier material—including a nostalgic recollection of the habanera—framing this movement as a kind of emotional recapitulation. In a brilliant touch of cyclical form, Turina brings back the main themes from both movements, now subtly altered and passed between instruments. The viola’s earlier melody returns, this time played by the piano, and the work concludes with a coda that unites its thematic threads in a final gesture of reflection.

Franz Peter Schubert (1797–1828)

Piano Trio in E-flat Major, D. 929

Composed 1827 | Vienna, Austria

In the fall of 1827, Franz Schubert composed two of the greatest works in the piano trio repertoire: the lyrical *Trio in B-flat Major*, D. 898, and the more expansive *Trio in E-flat Major*, D. 929. Contemporary audiences often favor the charm and relative concision of the B-flat Trio, while critics have sometimes found the E-flat Trio unwieldy in length. But in the 19th century, it was quite the opposite. Robert Schumann praised the E-flat Trio as “spirited, masculine, and dramatic,” preferring it to its companion. The truth is that both are radiant masterpieces—intimate and expansive, lyrical and searching—by a composer only thirty years old and at the height of his powers.

And that power was hard-won. At the time of writing, Schubert was battling illness, financial uncertainty, and a sense of artistic isolation. He had recently suffered the death of Beethoven—his musical hero—and knew that his own health was declining. Yet 1827–28 proved to be the most astonishingly productive period of his life, yielding not only the two piano trios but also the *F minor Fantasy* for piano four-hands, *Winterreise*, *Schwanengesang*, the last three piano sonatas, the sublime

String Quintet in C Major, and so much more.

Schubert himself regarded the trio highly enough that he chose it as the centerpiece of the only public concert devoted entirely to his music during his lifetime. Held at Vienna’s Musikverein on December 26, 1827, the concert was organized by a circle of friends and was received with genuine enthusiasm—an all-too-rare moment of recognition for Schubert. The trio was also the only one of his works to be published beyond Austria while he was still alive.

The first movement begins boldly, with all three instruments stating the opening motive in unison—a commanding gesture that launches a sonata form filled with drama, warmth, and contrapuntal richness. Schubert’s lyricism is always close at hand, but here it’s tempered by drive and direction. Still, the music never rushes. As critic James Keller notes, Schubert rarely gives the impression of being in a hurry. Schumann famously described Schubert’s music as being of “heavenly length”—not to suggest bloat, but rather a kind of suspended time in which ideas blossom slowly and fully.

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About the Bayan

The **bayan** is a type of chromatic button accordion most closely associated with Russian and Eastern European music. Named after the legendary Slavic bard Boyan, the instrument has long served as a powerful vehicle for storytelling and emotional expression. While it may resemble the Western accordion in appearance, the bayan differs in construction, tuning, and tone—producing a darker, more resonant sound that is often compared to a small pipe organ.

Unlike the piano-key accordion, the bayan uses buttons for both hands, with a chromatic button layout on the right and a highly flexible bass system on the left. This design allows for exceptional range and technical agility, making the bayan well-suited for both traditional folk music and contemporary classical works. Composers such as Sofia Gubaidulina and Edison Denisov have written virtuosic pieces for the instrument, exploring its wide dynamic palette and expressive nuance.

Today, the bayan is celebrated for its ability to bridge genres and traditions. Whether evoking the earthy pulse of a folk dance or the searching lines of modern chamber music, the bayan brings a distinctive voice to the stage—rich, soulful, and unmistakably Slavic.



COUNT ME IN

SATURDAY | JULY 19, 3 PM

UIW | DIANE BENNACK HALL, SAN ANTONIO

*Count Me In is chamber music with a serious groove. Beethoven kicks things off with his delightfully cheeky **Kakadu Variations**—a slow burn that builds into a full-blown romp. From there, it's all in: Piazzolla's tango fire, Gabriela Lena Frank's folkloric brilliance, and original works by Stas Venglevski that blur the lines between dance, drama, and pure joy. With the accordion in the spotlight, plus a devilish dash of John Williams and a final swirl of **La Cumparsita**, this concert is a rhythmic, joy-fueled celebration of musical togetherness. With so much rhythmic spark and ensemble fire, this program doesn't wait for you to say "count me in"—it pulls you in from the very first note.*

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Variations in G major on "Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu," Op. 121a,
for piano, violin, and cello
Composed ca.1803–24 |
Vienna, Austria

In a career filled with monumental string quartets, symphonies, and piano sonatas, Beethoven's *Kakadu Variations* might seem like an outlier—a lighthearted set of variations on a catchy tune from a forgotten comic opera. But there's more going on here than meets the ear.

The theme—"Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu"—comes from Wenzel

Müller's wildly popular 1794 opera *Die Schwestern von Prag* (*The Sisters from Prague*). The word *Kakadu* means cockatoo in German, but in this context likely refers not to a parrot, but to a flamboyant pompadour hairstyle fashionable in Vienna at the time. The character Kakadu is a tailor and comic braggart, who tells of his misadventures: traveling the world, getting hauled before the French Convention, mistakenly conscripted into the military, and finally escaping home to Germany. The tone is satirical, irreverent, and delightfully absurd.

Beethoven's decision to use this tune in a variation set—especially one introduced by a brooding, minor-key *Adagio assai*—was almost certainly tongue-in-cheek. The contrast between the tragic weight of the introduction and the perky

theme that follows would have been both surprising and hilarious to contemporary listeners. But this isn't just musical slapstick. The variations that follow range widely in character and craft: from graceful elegance to brilliant virtuosity, from lyrical charm to contrapuntal sophistication.

Though published in 1824—during the same period Beethoven was finishing the *Diabelli Variations*, the *Missa Solemnis*, and the *Ninth Symphony*—the *Kakadu Variations* likely originated much earlier, perhaps as early as 1803. Beethoven returned to the piece in 1816, revising it substantially, and likely made final touches before publication. Scholar Lewis Lockwood has traced the work's layered evolution and sees it as a “nostalgic” act by an older Beethoven looking back on a youthful sketch and dressing it in the denser textures and expressive power of his mature style.

This is especially evident in the remarkable double fugue that bridges the final variation to the *Allegretto* coda—a compact burst of counterpoint that recalls the architectural fugues of Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* and even the *Ninth Symphony*. Its presence adds weight and surprise to a work otherwise full of charm, wit, and theatrical flair.

The *Kakadu Variations* may be playful on the surface, but they show Beethoven working at multiple levels: parodying convention, experimenting with form, and relishing the act of

transformation. And transformation is, after all, the essence of variation. On a program called *Count Me In*, where rhythm, variation, and ensemble interplay are key themes, Beethoven's witty, richly layered work makes a fitting and fascinating entry point.

Stas Venglevski (b. 1964)

Not a Clue
for flute and bayan

Stasera
for flute and bayan

Works described from the stage by the composer.

Gabriela Lena Frank (b. 1972)

Four Folk Songs
for piano, violin, and cello
Composed 2012 | United States

Gabriela Lena Frank's music lives at the intersection of cultures. Born in Berkeley, California, to a mother of Peruvian-Chinese heritage and a father of Lithuanian-Jewish descent, Frank has long explored questions of identity through sound—drawing on her diverse ancestry to create music that is vibrant, layered, and deeply

personal. Trained as a pianist and composer in the Western classical tradition, she has carved out a space that is uniquely her own: one that fuses folk traditions, storytelling, and classical forms with stunning clarity and imagination.

Her *Four Folk Songs* for piano trio (2012) is a prime example of this synthesis. Written for the relatively traditional instrumentation of piano, violin, and cello, the piece infuses the concert hall with the colors, rhythms, and gestures of Peruvian music. But these are not arrangements or transcriptions—they are reimaginings, composed from the inside out. Each movement draws on a different facet of Peruvian culture, translated into a musical language that's unmistakably Frank's.

Canto para La María Angola opens the set with solemn resonance. Inspired by the legendary María Angola church bell in Cusco, the music evokes tolling sonorities and a sense of ritual gravity—both reverent and mythic.

Children's Dance captures the joy and unpredictability of children at play. With darting rhythms and quick, playful exchanges, this movement dances in miniature, full of curiosity and delight.

Serenata is a love song in the style of the traditional serenades performed by guitarists in Peruvian eateries. Gentle, swaying rhythms and lyrical lines create a mood of nighttime warmth and quiet devotion.

Chasqui, named after the swift-footed

messengers of the Inca Empire, brings the piece to a propulsive close. The rhythms are driving, the textures lean and agile, and the sense of motion is relentless—music in perpetual forward stride.

Frank's music invites performers and audiences alike into a kind of musical conversation, one that is at once intimate and expansive, rooted in cultural memory and alive in the present moment.

Stas Venglevski (b. 1964)

Two-Step
Hey Polka
Love and Pigeons
Octobler Rondo
Spring Dance
for flute and bayan

Works described from the stage by the composer.

John Williams (b. 1932)

Devil's Dance from *The Witches of Eastwick*
for violin and bayan
Composed 1987 | Hollywood, CA

John Williams may be best known for the sweeping grandeur of *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter*, but in *Devil's*

Dance from *The Witches of Eastwick* (1987), he lets loose with wicked flair. This electrifying showpiece comes from the film's climactic ballroom scene, where supernatural mischief takes center stage. Originally written for violin and orchestra, it's a dazzling blend of classical virtuosity and cinematic sorcery—equal parts Paganini and pyrotechnics.

In this arrangement for violin and bayan, the music crackles with even more edge and agility. The violin cackles, teases, and seduces, dashing through fiendish runs and sudden leaps. The bayan—an orchestra in a box—adds slithering harmonies, rhythmic bite, and bursts of infernal laughter. Together, the duo conjures an atmosphere both gleeful and unhinged, as if dancing on a wire over some delicious abyss.

Gerardo Matos Rodríguez (1897–1948)

La Cumparsita

for violin, cello, piano, and bayan

Composed 1916 |

Montevideo, Uruguay

No tango is more iconic—or more instantly recognizable—than *La Cumparsita*. Composed in 1916 by a teenage Gerardo Matos Rodríguez, a Uruguayan architecture student with a gift for melody, the piece began life as a march before being transformed into

a tango with lyrics by Pascual Contursi and Enrique Maroni. Over time, it became the unofficial national anthem of tango, closing milongas across the globe and evoking a heady mix of nostalgia, longing, and romance.

This arrangement for violin, cello, piano, and bayan reveals the piece's operatic sweep and emotional depth. The bayan lends a breathy elegance and expressive shading, while the strings sing and sigh, alternating between lush phrasing and pointed rhythmic snaps. The piano anchors the ensemble with classic tango pulses and surging harmonies. Far from a museum piece, this *Cumparsita* lives and breathes—it's both dance and drama, heartbreak and heat.

Astor Piazzolla (1921–1992)

Verano Porteño from *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*

for violin, cello, flute, bayan, and piano

Composed 1965 | Buenos Aires, ARG

Astor Piazzolla's *Verano Porteño*—or *Summer in Buenos Aires*—simmers with sultry heat and the restless energy of a city that never stops moving. Composed in 1965 as a standalone piece (well before it became part of his *Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*), *Verano* captures both the sweltering weather and the simmering tension of a Buenos Aires

summer: languid afternoons, restless nights, and the charged pulse of urban life. Like much of Piazzolla's music, it blends Argentine tango with classical structure and jazz-inflected freedom.

This version, arranged for violin, cello, flute, bayan, and piano, teems with colorful interplay and rhythmic bite. At times the flute soars like hot wind off the pavement, while the violin and cello take turns smoldering or slicing through the texture. The bayan adds both breath and bite—whispering, snarling, or anchoring the ensemble's swagger—while the piano steers with percussive authority. Melancholy lyricism rubs up against streetwise edge, and sudden shifts in tempo or texture keep the music alert and alive. *Verano Porteño* doesn't ask you to sit back and watch the season unfold—it pulls you into its heat and motion.

THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

SATURDAY | JULY 19, 3 PM

UIW | DIANE BENNACK HALL, SAN ANTONIO

*As we approach the final concert of this season's festival, **The Final Countdown** draws together a tapestry of musical voices—nostalgic, fiery, sacred, and celebratory. This program moves across eras and continents, opening with refined elegance and closing with the passionate pulse of popular tradition. Strings and winds, piano and bayan intertwine in a genre-crossing journey that bids farewell not with solemnity, but with soul.*

Bohuslav Martinů (1890–1959)

Trio

for flute, cello, and piano, H. 300

Composed 1944 | NYC, United States

Composed in 1944 in New York City, Bohuslav Martinů's Trio for flute, cello, and piano is a compact gem—bright, rhythmically vital, and full of life. Written during his wartime exile in the United States, the piece reflects Martinů's signature blend of neoclassical form, Czech folk character, and modern harmonic language. Though far from home, Martinů retained the buoyancy and inventive spirit that marks so much of his best chamber music.

The instrumentation itself—flute, cello, and piano—is somewhat unusual, but Martinů handles it with brilliant

balance and conversational grace. Each instrument has a distinct voice, and their interplay often feels like an intimate and witty dialogue. The music is lean and elegant, never showy, and filled with the kind of spontaneous energy that gives chamber music its unique charm.

The first movement, *Allegretto*, opens with syncopated rhythms and playful exchanges between the instruments. Czech folk music is never directly quoted, but its dance rhythms and light-footed spirit clearly inform the style. The textures are transparent, and the mood is immediately engaging—music that smiles without needing to raise its voice.

The second movement, *Adagio*, offers a lyrical contrast. Here, the cello and flute share a singing, introspective melody while the piano lays down gentle harmonic support. The tone is wistful and still—an inward breath

between the more extroverted outer movements.

The finale begins in dreamy ambiguity before launching into a whirling, folk-tinged rondo. Rhythmic surprises and sly harmonic shifts keep players and listeners on their toes. The music gathers momentum toward a ending full of sparkle and dash—a joyful sprint forward.

Though composed in exile and wartime uncertainty, Martinů's trio feels anything but heavy. It affirms, rather than reflects, and speaks in tones of resilience, wit, and vitality.

Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)

Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 120

Composed 1922–23 | Paris, France

In 19th-century France, musical life revolved around three great institutions: the Paris Conservatoire, the Opéra, and the Opéra-Comique. These were all part of a single ecosystem—singers singing opera, instrumentalists playing in opera orchestras, composers writing opera, and the results performed on subsidized stages. Instrumental concert music, especially chamber music, had little place in this system. What few concerts were mounted often featured operatic paraphrases or other light fare, and serious instrumental music was viewed as peripheral to the musical milieu.

Composers who wished to work outside opera—particularly in the realm of chamber music—had two options: cultivate connections through the salons of Parisian high society, or join grassroots initiatives like the Société Nationale de Musique, founded in 1871 under the banner *Ars Gallica* to promote French instrumental art. Gabriel Fauré, educated not at the Conservatoire but at the École Niedermeyer (a school for church musicians), would travel both paths. He became a regular at the salons of Camille Saint-Saëns and Pauline Viardot, where he met many of France's leading musical figures. With Saint-Saëns and others, he co-founded the Société Nationale, which would premiere many of his early works and provide a platform for the revival of French instrumental music.

Fauré eventually came full circle: in 1905, after a series of musical-political upheavals, he was appointed director of the very Conservatoire that had once excluded him. As director, he initiated sweeping reforms and championed modernist voices—earning the nickname “Robespierre” for his thorough house-cleaning. But the toll on his health was great. Beset by worsening hearing loss, emphysema, and declining vision, Fauré retired in 1920. That retirement was, ironically, the most fruitful compositional period of his life. In just four years, he produced a final cluster of masterpieces: the Second Piano Quintet (Op. 115), the String Quartet (Op. 121), and the *Piano Trio in D minor*, Op. 120, composed in 1922–23. Fauré worked on the *Andantino* in the summer of 1922 in Annecy-le-Vieux,

completing the outer movements the following winter in Paris. The trio was premiered in May 1923 by a group of young Conservatoire prizewinners and received a second, star-studded performance the next month by Thibaud, Casals, and Cortot. Fauré dedicated the score to Madame Maurice Rouvier, though a glowing letter from Queen Elisabeth of Belgium, who believed the piece had been dedicated to her, captures its impact: “This work is so great and full of the charm of poetry... I was enveloped by that inexpressible exaltation which emanates from your compositions.”

Despite calling it “a little trio,” Fauré imbued the work with grace, contrapuntal detail, and harmonic subtlety—hallmarks of his late style. The first movement, *Allegro ma non troppo*, opens with a long-spun melody marked *cantando*—“singing.” The line unfolds with quiet assurance, drifting through distant harmonic realms while maintaining its internal logic and clarity. There’s a sense of inevitability in how the music moves forward—its momentum is not urgent, but irresistible. Beneath the surface calm lies a current of energy that never lets go.

The second movement, *Andantino*, is deeply inward and tender, with the melody entrusted to the strings, while the piano lays down a foundation of simple, pulsing chords. The result is music of hushed intimacy, almost meditative in its restraint. This is one

of Fauré’s most quietly poignant movements—expressive without ever becoming indulgent. The atmosphere is one of suspended time, a kind of luminous stillness.

The finale, *Allegro vivo*, erupts with rhythmic vitality. Originally conceived as a scherzo, the movement retains the lightning-fast reflexes and taut energy of that form—everything is charged with urgency. Moments of quiet function not as repose, but as springs coiled for release. The interplay between instruments is agile and precise, yet the emotional arc is expansive: exhilaration, tension, release. It’s a remarkable fusion of formal grace and visceral drive.

Fauré lived well into the age of Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Bartók, but he remained a classicist in spirit. “All those who seem to create new ideas,” he once wrote, “are only expressing, through their own individuality, what others have already thought and said.” That spirit of continuity and refinement is on full display in this trio—written not in defiance of the modern world, but as one of his parting gifts to it. It is music of introspection and light—an expression not of farewell, exactly, but of final clarity.

Johann Sebastian Bach

(1685–1750), arr. Andrei Golsky

Gypsy Invention | Based on Bach’s Two-Part Invention in D minor

Arranger Andrei Golsky reimagines one of Bach’s pedagogical masterpieces through the lens of Eastern European folk dance. This virtuosic adaptation of Bach’s Two-Part Invention in D minor injects syncopation, ornament, and rhythmic asymmetry into the composer’s clean counterpoint. The result is something that feels both reverent and mischievous—a spirited blend of structure and freedom that captures the thrill of transformation. Bach, filtered through folk rhythm, invites us to rethink what it means to “count”—not merely to keep time, but to infuse it with joy.

Efrem Podgaitis (b. 1949)

Ave Maria, Op. 195
for cello and bayan
Composed 2005 | Russia

Efrem Podgaitis, born in 1949 in Vinnytsia, Ukraine, is one of the most prolific and stylistically versatile composers in contemporary Ukrainian music. A graduate of the Moscow Conservatory and a professor at the Ippolitov-Ivanov State Musical College, Podgaitis has written across virtually

every genre—operas, symphonies, choral works, concertos, and an expansive catalog of chamber music. His works are marked by expressive lyricism, rhythmic complexity, and a gift for illuminating unexpected instrumental pairings.

Composed in 2005 and designated as his Opus 195, *Ave Maria* was written for two of Russia’s most celebrated performers: bayan virtuoso Friedrich Lips and cellist Vladimir Tonkha. It’s a work of restrained intensity and spiritual reflection, using the deep, singing voice of the cello and the rich tonal spectrum of the bayan to evoke a timeless sense of devotion. The piece unfolds in slow waves, at once contemplative and emotionally charged. Podgaitis doesn’t set a sacred text here, but the music carries the weight of a prayer—personal, searching, and resonant with silence.

Angél Villoldo (1861–1919)

El Choclo
for flute, cello, piano, and bayan
Composed 1903–05 |
Buenos Aires, ARG

Angél Villoldo is widely credited as one of the founding fathers of Argentine tango. Born in Buenos Aires, he was a singer, guitarist, and composer who brought the tango from its roots in urban dance halls and street corners into mainstream popularity at the turn of the 20th century. His most famous work, *El Choclo* (“The Corn Cob”),

is one of the earliest tangos to gain international recognition.

First performed in Buenos Aires around 1905, *El Choclo* has been arranged for countless ensembles and performed in settings ranging from smoky cafés to grand concert halls. Villoldo's original melody is instantly catchy—bold, syncopated, and tinged with both swagger and sentimentality. Its enduring popularity speaks not only to the strength of the tune but to the tango's remarkable adaptability.

In this version for flute, cello, piano, and bayan, *El Choclo* takes on new textures and colors. The bayan brings earthy pulse and rhythmic clarity, the flute dances above with sparkling embellishments, and the cello and piano anchor the harmonic and percussive drive.

Astor Piazzolla (1921–1992)

Ave Maria

for flute, cello, and bayan
Composed 1984 | Buenos Aires, ARG

While best known for the rhythmic fire and daring spirit of *nuevo tango*, Astor Piazzolla also had a deeply lyrical side—nowhere more evident than in his *Ave Maria*. Originally composed in 1984 as incidental music for a film (*Enrico IV*, based on Pirandello's play), the piece was later published under

the title *Tanti anni prima* (“So Many Years Ago”) and eventually became known as Piazzolla's *Ave Maria*.

Unlike the more famous *Ave Maria* settings of Schubert or Gounod, Piazzolla's version contains no sacred text. Yet its quiet intensity and sustained melodic lines evoke an unmistakably prayerful atmosphere. The music unfolds slowly and tenderly, a meditation on memory and longing, shaped by Piazzolla's unique blend of tango melancholy and classical restraint.

In this arrangement for flute, cello, and bayan, the piece glows with warmth and intimacy. The bayan lends breath and depth, the cello provides a resonant core, and the flute traces the melodic arc with quiet radiance.

Carlos Gardel (1890–1935)

Por una cabeza

for violin, cello, piano, and bayan
Composed 1935 | Buenos Aires, ARG

Few songs in the tango repertoire are as beloved—or as cinematic—as *Por una cabeza*. Composed in 1935 by tango icon Carlos Gardel with lyrics by Alfredo Le Pera, the song's title is a horseracing phrase that means “by a head.” The lyrics speak of a compulsive gambler who compares his addiction to horseraces with his

attraction to women. Gardel's lilting melody and Le Pera's poignant lyrics made the piece an instant classic, and its legacy has only grown thanks to countless recordings and memorable film appearances, from *Scent of a Woman* to *Schindler's List*.

Gardel, born in France and raised in Argentina, was the golden voice of tango's golden age—a singer, composer, and actor whose music helped elevate tango from dance hall entertainment to national art form. *Por una cabeza* is one of his most elegant creations: wistful, seductive, and heartbreakingly brief, like the flicker of a memory or a final glance goodbye.

Jacob Gade (1879–1963)

Jalousie (“Tango Tzigane”)

for violin, cello, piano, and bayan
Composed 1925 | Copenhagen, DK

Written in 1925 by Danish composer and conductor Jacob Gade, *Jalousie*—subtitled “Tango Tzigane” or “Gypsy Tango”—quickly became one of the most recognizable tangos of the 20th century. Originally composed as accompaniment to a silent film, the piece soon took on a life of its own, sweeping across ballrooms and concert halls with its potent blend of fiery rhythm and lush, romantic lyricism.

The piece unfolds in two dramatically contrasting sections: a brooding, restless tango theme that smolders

with suspicion and desire, followed by a soaring, expansive melody that seems to plead for reconciliation. Gade, then the principal conductor of the Palads Cinema in Copenhagen, brought a sense of cinematic flair and orchestral drama to this tango, elevating it far beyond dance music.

In this arrangement for violin, cello, piano, and bayan, *Jalousie* becomes an intimate theater of emotion. The bayan lends both rhythmic propulsion and expressive shading, while the strings and piano navigate the piece's sweeping mood swings with elegance and flair.

Ukrainian Traditional

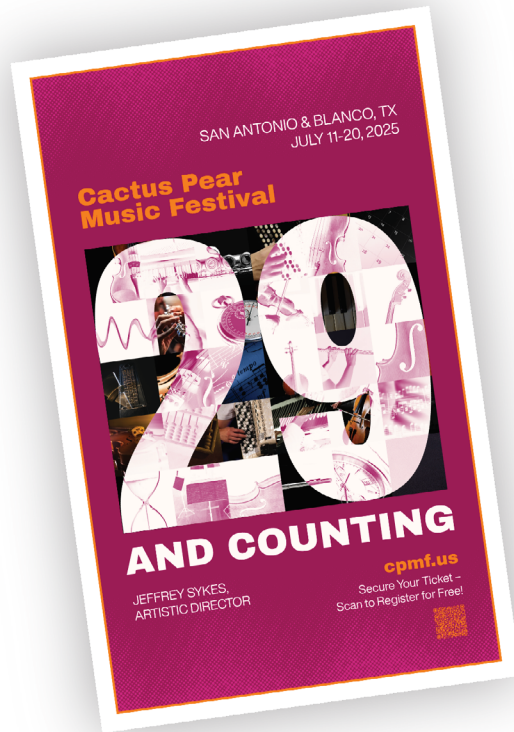
Rozpryahayte, khloptsi, koni (“Unharness the Horses, Lads”)

for flute, strings, piano, and bayan
Composed in the 19th century | Ukraine

A beloved staple of the Ukrainian folk tradition, *Rozpryahayte, khloptsi, koni* (“Unharness the Horses, Lads”) is a Cossack ballad that tells a timeless tale of longing, rest, and romantic intrigue. Sung across generations and regions, this song begins with a pastoral image: young men returning from their travels, unhitching their horses, and settling in for the evening. But beneath the calm lies anticipation—one of the lads has other plans.

The lyrics spin a gently unfolding story of courtship, jealousy, and reconciliation, all grounded in the

rhythms of village life. Its most famous refrain—"Marusya, one, two, three viburnums"—is both a poetic image and a cultural touchstone, representing beauty, the cycles of nature, and the bittersweetness of love remembered or lost.



**We're counting
down the days to
share it all with you.**

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