1787

Haydn

Symphony No.88

MUSIC
Mozart
Eine kleine Nachtmusik

ART
David
The Death of Socrates

LITERATURE
Goethe
The Sorrows of Young Werther

HISTORY
The U. S. Constitution is signed by delegates of the 13 member states in Philadelphia.

1876

Smetana

"The Moldau" & *"Šárka" from Má Vlast*

MUSIC
Lalo
Cello Concerto

ART
Renoir
Bal du moulin de la Galette

LITERATURE
Twain
The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

HISTORY
Alexander Graham Bell applies for a U.S. patent for the telephone.

1882

Jaëll

Cello Concerto

MUSIC
Wagner
Parsifal

ART
Manet
A Bar at the Folies-Bergère

LITERATURE
Ibsen
An Enemy of the People

HISTORY
The Elektromote, the world's first trolleybus, begins operation in Berlin.

1919

Boulanger

D'un matin de printemps

MUSIC
Elgar
Cello Concerto

ART
Sargent
Gassed

LITERATURE
Wodehouse
My Man Jeeves

HISTORY
A wave of molasses sweeps through Boston.

THE MOLDAU & MORE

For her second program as Music Director of the Rhode Island Philharmonic, Maestro Reinhardt has chosen gems, both familiar and unfamiliar, that have garnered unfiltered praise since their inception.

Lili Boulanger was the younger sister of the 20th century's most influential teacher and mentor of composers, Nadia Boulanger. So, Nadia's opinion that Lili was the true talent in the family is not to be taken lightly. The first woman to win the coveted Prix de Rome in 1913, Lili was tragically plagued with ill-health for all her short life (she died at the age of 24). But she managed to gift us with 24 remarkable works that shimmer with colorful harmonies and instrumentation, of which *D'un matin de printemps* is her most frequently performed by orchestras.

After hearing the slow movement of Haydn's 88th symphony, no less a luminary than Johannes Brahms remarked "I want my Ninth Symphony to sound like this." The embellishments of the legato oboe and solo cello, intermittently punctuated by full-orchestra chords, leave an indelible impression, hanging in the air until long after the last note is played.

Marie Jaëll's name may ring a bell for some pianists in the audience, as she was a renowned and innovative pedagogue whose writings on piano technique are still revered 100 years after her death. Franz Liszt himself admired her immense talent, calling her a "brave, ambitious, and subtle composer….with a philosopher's brain and an artist's fingers." While she wrote the Cello Concerto in 1882 (making it the earliest known cello concerto by a woman composer), the manuscript was only recently discovered in a library in Strasbourg, and did not receive its U.S. premiere until last year.

The cycle of six symphonic poems collectively known as *Má Vlast* is Smetana's peerless musical love letter to the Czech nation, combining elements of history, geography, national character and legend. It quickly became such a symbol of Czech pride that not even Nazi occupation could mute its visceral resonance. A 1939 broadcast reveals an audience which not only follows each movement with ecstatic ovations but breaks into an overwhelming outburst of the Czech national anthem at the end.

THE MOLDAU & MORE
Open Rehearsal: Friday, October 17, 2025
TACO Classical: Saturday, October 18, 2025

D'un matin de printemps
LILI BOULANGER *(1893-1918)*
This is a RI Philharmonic Orchestra premiere. This piece is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, percussion, harp, celesta and strings.

"Though Lili Boulanger died in 1918 at the age of 24," wrote musicologist David Noakes, "hers was a creative life of more than mere promise; it was a life, at least, of partial fulfillment." Her older sister, Nadia found fulfillment as mentor to many of the 20th century's greatest composers (Elliott Carter, Aaron Copland, Philip Glass, Roy Harris,

Quincy Jones, and Astor Piazzolla, to name a scant few), and cemented a reputation during her long life as one of the most influential musical minds of the century. But Nadia herself was not much of a composer ("not bad, but useless" is how she described her own work). It was her sister, Lili, who had inherited that particular gene and, had she not died prematurely of Crohn's Disease at the age of 24, would undoubtedly have left a mark every bit as important as her sister's.

Tagging along at the age of five to sit in on her sister's classes at the Paris Conservatoire, Lili managed to learn harp, piano, cello and violin with some of the city's best teachers. But lingering health issues from a near-fatal attack of pneumonia when she was three, left her too weak to master any of those instruments, so she turned to composition. Her talent was clear to all, but chronic illness continued to prevent her from fulfilling her potential. Finally, at the age of 20, she became the first woman to win the prestigious Prix de Rome with her cantata *Faust et Hélène*. Other awards and distinctions soon followed. But the trip to Rome itself took its toll on her fragile system, and she was unable to compose for at least a month after her arrival. Then, while visiting home for what was supposed to be a short break, World War I broke out, causing yet further obstacles.

Despite her early death and the debilitating state of her health, Lili Boulanger completed a substantial number of compositions in which she demonstrated a highly developed creative personality. "Lili Boulanger brought to music a keen and prodigiously human sensibility," wrote one contemporary reviewer, "served in its expression by the full range of natural gifts, from grace, color, charm and subtlety to winged lyricism and obvious power, easy and profound. Such virtues, so rarely brought together for the benefit of one single creative temperament, are to be found in her works."

The complementary works *D'un matin de printemps* ("Of a Spring Morning") and *D'un soir triste* ("Of a Sad Evening"), of 1918, were the last scores Lili Boulanger wrote with her own hand, and both demonstrate a clear mastery of the new harmonic language of Impressionism. But unlike its somber companion piece, *D'un matin de printemps* invokes the bright and festive tones of a carefree spring morning. Arabesque-like melodies playfully twist and turn, revealing rhythmic surprises and poetic lyricism, until the harsh reality of time brings us to an abrupt conclusion with a final chord that seems to shimmer with the rays of the sun.

Symphony No.88 in G major
JOSEPH HAYDN *(1732-1809)*

Last performed February 2, 1974 with Francis Madeira conducting. This piece is scored for flute, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings.

In 1788, Johann Peter Tost, leader of the second violin section in Haydn's Esterháza orchestra, trundled off to Paris with a devious scheme. Hoping to capitalize on the current wave of popularity Haydn was enjoying in Paris as a result of his half dozen "Paris" Symphonies, Tost presented a noted publisher with two new Haydn symphonies (including No.88), as well as some string quartets and other music. But not all of the music was, in fact, Haydn's. When the publisher realized he had been duped, he confronted Haydn directly, hoping to renegotiate. But Haydn, ever one to appreciate a good joke, replied simply "Thus Herr Tost has swindled you."

And while symphony No.88 was indeed penned entirely by the master himself, a similar sleight of hand, albeit of a musical nature, is achieved here: what sounds like an accompaniment turns out to be a theme, recapitulations turn out to be false, melodies disappear into the background only to reappear unexpectedly, and offbeat patterns

abruptly shift to the downbeat. All of this makes the listener feel a bit like they're in the middle of a high-wire act, hoping to find their balance with each new musical phrase.

After a slow introduction, the first movement transitions to a lively Allegro, where Haydn creatively manipulates sonata form conventions to create an air of spontaneity. Listen for the way in which the second theme magically emerges from the first, and for the charming flute solo that lures the first theme back.

Cellos and oboes announce the arrival of the second movement – a set of variations on the theme they present that wafts from the sweet to the melancholy, from the diaphanous to the boisterous, often in the space of a single bar. Usually held in reserve for faster movements, the trumpets and timpani make their first appearance here, adding to its pathos. It was, in fact, Haydn's ability to achieve such a wide range of emotion by such deceptively simple means here that inspired Brahms to remark "I want my Ninth Symphony to sound like this." (Brahms never wrote a ninth symphony).

In order to give the third movement a truly rustic air, the master decides to break a few well-established rules. After a chorus or two of what sounds like a well-loved drinking song, the bassoon and violas seem to have enjoyed themselves a bit too much, and stumble together from note to note in parallel 5ths – a move that would give any first-year harmony student a failing grade. But in Haydn's hands, such an effect adds a touch of humor and drama before throwing us headlong into the high-spirited finale. Once there, offset rhythms – simultaneously buoyant and unsettling - keep the listener on their toes, until Haydn delights us with a perpetual-motion canon that, while fiendishly complicated, is considered one of the most cheerful Haydn ever wrote.

Cello Concerto (1882)

MARIE JAËLL *(1846-1925)*

This is a RI Philharmonic Orchestra premiere. In addition to a solo cello, this piece is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, timpani and strings.

A renowned pianist and pedagogue, who was also a close professional associate of Franz Liszt, Marie Jaëll gave herculean concerts in Paris consisting of all the major piano works of Beethoven, Chopin, Schumann, and, of course, Liszt. But, while echoes of those composers can be heard in her original compositions, Jaëll is no mere imitator. Discovered only recently, Jaëll's pioneering Cello Concerto was the first to be written by a woman, and shows her to have been a composer with a truly individual profile and approach. Dedicated to a cellist friend of hers, Jules Desart, who performed the premiere and likely had a hand in advising her on cello technique, the work boasts ample opportunities for the cello to shine as a solo instrument. From soaring melodies to double stops, from descending arpeggio patterns to octave passages, Jaëll's music brims with expressive depth and virtuosic power, making this concerto a true hidden gem of the Romantic era.

"The Moldau" & "Šárka" from *Má Vlast*

BEDŘICH SMETANA *(1824-1884)*

The Moldau" was last performed September 27, 2008 with Larry Rachleff conducting. "Šárka" is a RI Philharmonic Orchestra premiere. These pieces are scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp and strings.

Smetana could not hear a single sound for the last decade of his life. Tragically, this led to intermittent dementia (in the margin of score of the 1882 D minor Quartet he scrawled, "Composed in a state of disordered nerves – the outcome of my deafness." He would die two years later). But things had not yet progressed to such a grim degree when he began work on one of the greatest collections of tone poems ever written. *Má Vlast* ("My Country"), inspired by the land and lore of his native Bohemia, is the main reason that today we think of Smetana as "the father of Czech music," but there are many others. In 1861, when Smetana became active in the newly formed National Theater in Prague, he created a prolific and vivacious repertoire of Czech operas rooted in native folklore (the enduring masterpiece, *The Bartered Bride* among them). Such a show of pride in Czech culture bordered on the revolutionary in those days, when the lands of Bohemia and Moravia were ruled by the Austrian empire and anything not Austrian or German was considered decidedly low-brow.

The second of *Má Vlast*'s tone poems, "The Moldau" (or "Vltava" in the original Czech), is an ode to the river that flows across northern Bohemia and through Prague. In his preface to the score, Smetana wrote "Two springs pour forth in the shade of the Bohemian Forest, one warm and gushing, the other cold and peaceful. The forest brook, hastening on, becomes the river Moldau. Through thick woods it flows, as the gay sounds of the hunt and the notes of the hunter's horn are heard ever nearer. It flows through grass-grown pastures and lowlands where a wedding feast is celebrated with song and dance. At night, wood and water nymphs revel in its sparkling waves. Reflected on its surface are fortresses and castles – witnesses of bygone days of knightly splendor and the vanished glory of fighting times. At the St. John Rapids, the stream races ahead, winding through the cataracts, hewing out a path with its foaming waves through the rocky chasm into the broad riverbed – finally, flowing on in majestic peace toward Prague and welcomed by the time-honored castle Vyšehrad. Then it vanishes far beyond the poet's gaze."

Of the third movement of *Má Vlast*, the composer noted, "This poem depicts the story of Šárka [a daughter of the founding family of Bohemia], swearing vengeance on the whole male race for the infidelity of her lover. From afar is heard the arrival of armed men led by Ctirad, who has come to punish Šárka and her rebellious maidens. In the distance, Ctirad hears the feigned cries of a girl (Šárka) bound to a tree. On seeing her, he is overcome by her beauty and so inflamed with love that he frees her. By means of a previously prepared potion, she intoxicates Ctirad and his men, who fall asleep. As she sounds her horn (a pre-arranged signal), the rebel maidens, hidden in nearby rocks, rush to commit the bloody dead. The horror of general slaughter and the passion and fury of Šárka's fulfilled revenge form the end of the composition." Moving from one scene to the next with the pace of modern cinema, "Šárka" provides a dramatic apex to a work that, for Smetana, seems to have transformed his maddening prison of silence into a torrent of fervor for his country and his people.

The only real way to judge a piece of music is by listening to it. Although music lovers with an interest in out-of-print scores may have been able to get hold of some of Marie Jaëll's piano music, her orchestral music has not been heard since its first performance. Her major orchestral works provide an unexpected study of a composer whose instrument of choice might not have been, as was commonly believed, the piano – on which the virtuoso excelled in her first period of activity from 1855 to 1870 – but that 'king of instruments, the orchestra. Indeed, she had every right to be proud of her experiments in orchestration, her sense of drama, her subtle instrumentation and at times truly Impressionist textures.

"How insipid they are, these young women pianists who always play the same pieces by Liszt. But speak to me of La Jaëll! Here is an intelligent, witty woman: she produces her own works for the piano, which are just as bad as those by Liszt." It is hard to know how to take this strange tribute paid by Johannes Brahms to 'La Jaëll' in a letter of 1888 to Richard Heuberger, when he compared her compositions ironically – or cruelly – to those by Liszt. Brahms was a longstanding friend of the virtuoso pianist, Alfred Jaëll, who first performed and promoted many of the German master's works, so he would have known Marie Trautmann, who became Marie Jaëll in 1866. But whether Brahms was really familiar with the Alsatian prodigy's music is another matter. Were her pieces so widely distributed, played in the salons, published, discussed and reviewed in her day that it was amusing to ridicule them by comparing them disparagingly to works composed by that obscure pianist, Franz Liszt? There may well be parallels, on a different scale, between Liszt and the woman who later became his confidante and secretary: Liszt's talents as a composer seem to have gone unrecognized, and were even derided, for many years, unlike his genius as a pianist and improviser, a performer whose keyboard feats won him standing ovations throughout Europe. Was Brahms, in this letter, espousing a similar prejudice against virtuosi impudent enough to aspire to the noble art of composition? Whatever the case, it is difficult not to find him guilty of the widely shared misogyny which Marie Jaëll, along with other creatively active women, would have had to endure to some extent or other.

Marie Jaëll's body of works, however, although not prolific, does shed some light on the interest her music might have aroused at the time she was writing it, as well as on the unusual artistic path taken by a young piano prodigy who decided, in her twenties, to turn her back on an established career as a renowned performer. These works also show glimpses of the complicated concerns and enquiries of a certain Romantic strain of French music in the second half of the 19th century, a period influenced equally by a strong Italian heritage, a fascination for German and Austro-Hungarian models and a quest for a unique French identity. In 1878, she confided to her friend, Anna Sandherr: "Learning to compose is an abiding passion, I wake up with it in the morning, I go to sleep with it in the evening. I have such an elevated idea of my art that my only delight is to devote my life to it without hoping for anything else but to live through it and for it."

The Cello Concerto in F major (1882) was also highly successful, since its dedicatee, the famous cellist, Jules Delsart, worked hard to promote it. The Belgian cellist, Adolphe Fischer, another renowned performer and the dedicatee of Lalo's Cello Concerto, seems to have asked Jaëll for permission to perform the work at the Leipzig Gewandhaus. Unlike certain other concertos in which the soloist tends to get swallowed up by the orchestral texturing (Dvořák's masterpiece, for example, composed in 1896), the subtle scoring of Jaëll's Cello Concerto shows a close attention to the material and a light touch which brings out the melodic line of the cello. It might also be worth noting that these two concertos – by Dvořák and Jaëll – share a surprisingly similarity (particularly in their respective first movements) in that they both have a resolutely 'American' inspiration: Marie Jaëll's sister was the first wife of Conrad Diehl, a German doctor later elected mayor of the city of Buffalo. The Alsatian composer was very fond of her American nieces and nephews, whom she made her legatees after her death. After a spirited Allegro moderato, which transports the listener into the midst of vast unexplored spaces,

the composer hits a particularly rich vein of inspiration in the slow movement, a delicate Andantino sostenuto in the strings, alternating pizzicati and bowed notes each time the melody recurs; the short central section of the movement, with its unusual 9/16 time signature – a sort of triple beat within what is already a triple beat – emphasizes the poignant push and pull of the expressive musical writing, and greatly enhances the impact of the floating cello line. The impassioned tarantella-style finale concludes this extremely condensed work, barely fifteen minutes long, which is attractive for its simplicity, energy and brilliance. The restricted instrumental forces invite the cello to take center stage in the musical discourse, surrounding and arraying the soloist with carefully worked colors and textures.

A career woman and artist who had earned her place in a male-dominated world, Marie Jaëll strove to gain recognition from her peers and become, in a manner of speaking, the Frenchest of French composers. She actively opted for France after Alsace-Lorraine was annexed and chose to study under Camille Saint-Saëns, a true national treasure. In 1879, she was the first woman to be admitted to the Société Nationale de Compositeurs de Musique; her works were frequently performed at concerts organized by the Société Nationale de Musique.

But how should her sometimes enigmatic musical output be categorized? Was she a typically French composer? A composer of German inspiration? Although Marie Jaëll protested throughout her life against a Wagnerism she was reluctant to acknowledge, it should be remembered, nevertheless, that her early piano training was dominated by the German and Austrian repertory, which left its indelible stamp on her work; later, her extensive acquaintance with Liszt's works, as well as the series of sensational concerts during which she performed not only the complete Beethoven sonatas, but also Chopin's complete piano music, only strengthened the impression that this woman, in her heart and soul, looked to Germany, and beyond.

However, in the midst of this unresolvable conflict of loyalties, she attempted to go her own way and we can identify several hallmarks of her idiosyncratic approach: her emphasis on colorful, imagistic writing and an exploration of the natural and inner worlds; her fusion of all the instruments together – soloists or not – so that their complex individual lines work together to create a unique discourse, a single orchestral voice; her realization of a type of minimalism in which the initial material is not varied, developed and enriched in the classical style, but remains unembellished to the end. Focusing on an unexpected instrument, the orchestra, she produced groundbreaking work, becoming a pioneer on her own terms. She invented a free art of orchestration in which the material was governed, shaped and crafted entirely by the poetic aim.

Sébastien Troester
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From the BruZane release **Marie Jaëll: A Portrait** available here:

https://www.bruzanemediabase.com/en/mediabase/scientific-publications/marie-jaell-musique-symphonique-musique-piano and available through Amazon.