

***Sinfonia in D Major, "La Veneziana"***

**Antonio Salieri (1750–1825)**

Written: 1779

Movements: Three

Style: Classical

Duration: Nine minutes

If you've seen the play or movie *Amadeus*, forget everything you learned about Antonio Salieri in those great dramas. He didn't try to poison Mozart. Granted, both Mozart and Salieri vied for the same jobs, and Salieri often came out on top, but Mozart seemed to be more bothered by the Italians competing against the Germans in the imperial city of Vienna. Mozart may not have liked Salieri, but Salieri seems to have admired Mozart. He revived Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* rather than present one of his own operas. He brought three of Mozart's masses to the coronation of Leopold II. When Salieri saw Mozart's *Magic Flute*, Wolfgang reported to his wife "He heard and saw with all his attention, and from the overture to the last choir there was not a piece that didn't elicit a 'Bravo!'"

Antonio Salieri was born in Legnano near Venice. Orphaned as a teenager, he ended up in Vienna apprenticed to the Bohemian composer Florian Gassmann. He wrote his first (of forty) operas when he was nineteen. He became Chamber Composer and Conductor of the Italian Opera when he was twenty four and was the dominant force in Italian Opera in Vienna for nearly thirty years. Appointed Hofkapellmeister in 1788, he was responsible for music at the court chapel. He was the first director of the Vienna's Sing-Akademie and taught Beethoven, Schubert, and Liszt.

Salieri didn't really write the *Sinfonia "La Veneziana"* as a true *sinfonia*. It is the invention of a modern editor, Pietro Spada, who took the overture to Salieri's opera *La scuola de' gelosi* (*The school for jealousy*) and combined it with the overture to his *La partenza*

*inaspettata* (*The unexpected departure*) to form a three-movement *sinfonia*. The three movements are quintessentially Italian in style: clear, tuneful, ebullient. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Salieri knew that times and tastes were changing, so he essentially stopped composing. "I realized that musical taste was gradually changing in a manner completely contrary to that of my own times," he said. "Eccentricity and confusion of genres replaced reasoned and masterful simplicity."

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***IOURS for Solo Trombone and Chamber Orchestra***  
***Norman Bolter (1955–)***

Written: 2001

Movements: Three

Style: Contemporary

Duration: Nineteen minutes

Credit Mr. Greenjeans, who played the trombone on an episode of the Captain Kangaroo television show, for inspiring a four-year-old Norman Bolter to take up that instrument. Sixteen years later, he became a member of the Boston Symphony. He was also principal trombone of the Boston Pops and a founding member of the Empire Brass. He is currently on the faculties of both New England Conservatory and Boston Conservatory. His many compositions are inspired by the natural worlds and the human story.

When he was commissioned to write a concerto for trombone and orchestra by the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra, he was immediately, “inspired by a specific theme and soon set out to write about our local cosmic family and trinity: sun, planet (earth) and moon.” Here is a highly condensed version of his synopsis of IOURS:

The first movement, URS, endeavors to connect to the earth’s child and our closest neighbor, the moon. . . . The trombone is used in a way not often heard. Special techniques underscore the barrenness of the landscape with its low gravity and lack of color variation. The orchestral texture is spacious and sustained, [enhancing] the quality of stillness and low gravity.

The second movement, ORS, endeavours to evoke the ‘Great Mother,’ our planet earth. A beautiful blue princess, she holds her own atmosphere and has vast waters covering the greater part of her surface. The orchestra is very active during this

movement . . . The 'mother aspect' has its own melody . . . played first by cellos and later within the movement by the solo trombone. The trombone also expresses the awe-inspiring multiplicity of life on earth.

IRS represents the sun, the 'Great Father' in our solar system. The ancient Egyptians believed the sun manifested as four solar divinities . . . bull, lion, eagle, and serpent. The movement opens with the brass enactment of the great lion's paws . . . The bull aspect appears with the solo trombone's fist entrance into the movement . . . then transforming into the eagle aspect given voice through the trombone's long, soaring line. Soon, however, this 'shape shifts' into the aspect of serpent. The work culminates in the awe and praise of the sheer magnificence of the sun . . .

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***Andante for Strings***  
***Rissolty, Rossolty***  
**Ruth Crawford Seeger (1901–1953)**

Written: 1931 and 1939

Style: Contemporary

Duration: Four and three minutes

Ruth Crawford was away at college in Chicago when she excitedly wrote home to her mother: “It seems so wonderful each lesson to discover some new chord which will make more variety; and it is so interesting, the composing of one's own melodies, I just love it. . . . But think, how *extremely* interesting.”

Ruth Crawford Seeger was a pioneering composer and ethnomusicologist. She was a respected part of the modernist movement while she lived and composed in Chicago during the 1920s. When she moved to New York City to study with Charles Seeger (her future husband) she was part of the “ultra-moderns.” During the depression, her interest shifted to conserving and spreading American folk song. Her transcriptions were an important part of the anthology *Our Singing Country*, and her book *American Folksongs for Children* (1948) is a classic.

The compositions on tonight’s program demonstrate the two sides of Ruth Crawford Seeger. *Andante for Strings* (from her ultra-modernist phase) is an orchestral arrangement of the third movement of her *String Quartet*. This is her description of the piece:

The underlying plan is heterophony [simultaneous variation of a single melodic line] of dynamics—a sort of counterpoint of crescendi and diminueindi. The crescendo and diminuendo in each instrument comes in definite rhythmic patterns, which change from time to time as the movement proceeds. The crescendos are intended to be precisely timed; the high point is indicated to occur at some specific beat of the measure. . . . No high point in the crescendo in any one instrument coincides with the

high point in any other instrument. . . . The melodic line grows out of this continuous increase and decrease; it is given, one tone at a time, to different instruments, and each new melodic tone is brought in at the high point in a crescendo.

In 1938, after a performance of her *String Quartet*, an audience member asked Seeger, ““Won’t you please write some music that a greater number of people can listen to: this seems like music for the very few.” “I will,” she responded. “I have become convinced during the past two years that my next music will be simpler to play and to understand.” The next year Seeger wrote *Rissolty, Rossolty* for the radio program *The Wellsprings of America* that featured arrangements of folk music by serious composers. In it, she cleverly combined a fiddle tune (*The Last of Callahan*) with two folk songs. The first, *Rissolty, Rossolty*, tells of a hapless husband burdened by a lazy wife. In the second, *Phoebe*, the wife trades places with the husband. “And presently little Phoebe came and saw him looking sad/She clapped her hands upon her sides and said that she was glad.”

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***Symphony No. 38 in D Major, K. 550***  
**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)**

Written: 1786

Movements: Three

Style: Classical

Duration: 26 minutes

On May 1, 1786, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's newest opera, *The Marriage of Figaro*, had its first performance in Vienna. It was a success, but it had only eight more performances in that city. Mozart had been living in Vienna for five years, and his novelty was beginning to wear off. Such was not the case in the Bohemian capital of Prague. *The Marriage of Figaro* was staged there in December, 1786. Franz Niemetschek, one of Mozart's early biographers, was an eyewitness to its success: "It is the absolute truth when I state that this opera was performed almost without a break throughout the winter and that it greatly alleviated the straitened circumstances of the manager."

Prague invited Mozart to visit and conduct some performances of *The Marriage of Figaro*. He arrived on January 11, 1787, and attended a ball that evening. Eight days later, Mozart presented an "academy"—a benefit concert for himself. Niemetschek described the event: "The theater had never been so full as on this occasion . . . We did not, in fact, know what to admire most, whether the extraordinary compositions or his extraordinary playing." One month later, Mozart returned to Vienna 1,000 florins (nearly \$10,000 today) richer, and with a contract to write a new opera for Prague: *Don Giovanni*.

The Symphony in D Major was on that academy program in Prague. Niemetschek described it as a "real masterpiece of instrumental composition, which [is] played with great élan and fire, so that the very soul is carried to sublime heights . . . [it] is still always a favorite in Prague, although it has no doubt been heard a hundred times." Mozart's *Symphony in D Major*

has been known as the *Prague Symphony* even since. It is one of his rare symphonies without a minuet and trio movement. The final movement features a melody from *The Marriage of Figaro*—surely recognizable to Prague audiences.

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