A Brief Overview of our Concert

One of Mozart’s most well-known and best-loved works, “Eine Kleine Nachtmusik” is a joyful Serenade, sometimes outgoing and sometimes most tender.

The Tangos on our program represent four of the most spirited. Three are Argentinian, and one, Jalousie, is from Denmark, showing that the Tango really swept the world.

Mendelssohn’s D Major String Quartet is one of the great mature masterworks of this remarkable child prodigy. It has boundless energy, mystery, and virtuosity. Its slow movement is one of the greatest of his “songs without words.”

W. A. Mozart  (1756-1791)

“Eine Kleine Nachtmusik” in G Major, K. 525

This divertimento for strings, under its original title, Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, is one of Mozart’s best-known and best-loved works. The literal translation of the title is “a little Serenade [night, or evening, music].”

Divertimenti, Serenades and Cassations were all works for small instrumental ensembles and were generally written for special social occasions. They enjoyed great popularity during the second half of the 18th century and were cultivated by both Haydn and Mozart.

Jacob Gade  (1879-1963)

Tango Jalousie

Gade’s “Tango Jalousie” is the prime example of the European Tango. Premiered in 1925, it became an instant international hit and was featured in over one hundred films. The royalties allowed the Danish composer of popular orchestral music to devote himself to composition full-time for the rest of his life, and since his death they now fund a foundation for young musicians. It is said that even today not a minute of time goes by where it is not played or danced somewhere in the world.
Angel Villoldo (1861-1919)

El Choclo

Known as the “father of the Tango,” Angel Villoldo often played in Buenos Aires cafés, singing and accompanying himself on guitar and harmonica. On November 3, 1905, Villoldo went to the upscale Restaurante Americano to show the resident pianist and orchestra leader, José Luis Roncallo, a Tango he had just composed. Roncallo balked at the idea of playing a Tango for the "crème-de-la crème" of Buenos Aires society. Yet the sound of this new Tango was so compelling that Roncallo decided to sneak it in disguised as a "danza criolla" (Creole dance), a style Villoldo was already famous for using.

Villoldo named the Tango “El Choclo” (the ear of corn) because “I loved it from the very first note, and for me the ear of corn is the tastiest ingredient of the ‘puchero’ [a stew].”

Gerardo Matos Rodriguez (b. 1900)

La Cumparsita

A 17-year-old architecture student and amateur pianist when he wrote “La Cumparsita,” Rodriguez was no composer. He had only written down the first two parts of his piece, and the first part lacks both harmony and a clear beat. Thus it was understandable that this work, later to become an enormous hit under the baton of Francisco Canaro, first found its way into the world of Tango anonymously. The great bandleader Firpo had to harmonize the first part and add a third part to give a complete work. A new set of lyrics were also added by two prominent Tango artists, and it was in this form that Rodriguez was shocked to hear it, seven years later, as a major hit. Decades of litigation restored Rodriguez’ rights to his part of the Tango.

The idea of the original lyrics was suffering and depression in the face of the colorful festivals. The second set of lyrics turned the Tango into a tale of a man jilted by his lover, a favorite theme of Tangos of every era.
Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

String Quartet in D Major, Op. 44, No. 1

Mendelssohn composed the three Opus 44 string quartets which were to crown his chamber music efforts during his summer vacations of 1837 and 1838.

The first movement is in sonata form with the development section mostly sequential and modulatory in nature, the sequences broadening in scope to contribute a very dramatic, almost symphonic, character to the whole movement.

The second movement, a menuetto (in typical ABA form), has a long, triadic melody, which is extended creatively through the movement’s harmonic foundation. The third movement, in a quasi-rondo structure, is very much a “song without words.”

The Finale is reminiscent of the Fourth Symphony (the “Italian”) which was composed in 1831. Its character and some of the inner details (e.g., rhythmic pulsation, descending sequences) are similarly striking.