

COLORADO COLLEGE



Summer
Music
festival

Program Notes
by
Michael Grace

FESTIVAL ARTISTS CONCERT

Thursday, June 25, 2026

7:00 PM

Packard Hall

Partita for wind quintet

Introduction and Theme: Allegro moderato

Variation: Poco vivace

Interlude: Adagio

Gigue: Allegro

Coda: Lento assai

Irving Fine
(1914-1962)

Irving Fine was born in Boston and spent most of his first 35 years there affiliated with Harvard as a student and later a faculty member. In 1950 he accepted a teaching chair at Brandeis University and remained there for the rest of his professional career. He had been mentored and praised by the most esteemed composers in the United States, including Aaron Copland, Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Koussevitzky, and Leonard Bernstein. And, his music often shows traces of their collective diverse styles, ranging from Stravinsky's progressive modernism to Copland's more traditional melodic and harmonic language.

The *Partita* for wind quintet was composed in 1948. A partita was a musical form from the Baroque Era that was made up of a suite of distinct contrasting movements, often different dance types, or a set of variations on a theme. In his commentary on this work, printed in the program for its first performance, Fine wrote:

“Described in the most general terms, the Partita is a set of free variations, although only the second movement bears any marked resemblance to the formal and tonal scheme of the ‘theme.’ Actually, the technique employed throughout is closer to what is usually called thematic metamorphosis. The material for the entire work is evolved out of two melodic fragments.”

The titles of each movement should give the listener a sense of its character. The first, *Introduction and Theme*, contains the main subject. The second, *Variation: poco vivace*, is a thematic “metamorphosis” of the theme. The third movement, *Interlude Adagio*, is a short meditation with simpler and warmer harmonies. The fourth, *Gigue: Allegro*, is by far the longest and most substantial of the movements. It opens with a theme for the bassoon while the other instruments chirp like little birds above it. That is followed immediately by a melody for the horn. Soon all the instruments participate in a clever contrapuntal dialogue. The *Partita* ends with a *Coda: Lento assai*. A “coda” is most often a musical “tail” tacked on to a more substantial “body.” But in this case, Fine makes it a rather substantial movement of its own. It is also unusual in that it is not the customary fast and vivacious finale but rather a tender slow movement that leaves the listener suspended in an epilogue that is in some ways more moving than the explosions that often conclude a composition.

Fine later noted that, "In writing this piece, I have consciously avoided the rather stylized, playful, contrapuntal idiom that is commonly associated with the woodwind medium. What I hoped to achieve was something perhaps more reflective; certainly, more intimate in expression." After its premiere performance, the work was praised by the New York Music Critics' Circle as "one of the best chamber music works introduced in New York City in the 1948-1949 musical season."

Divertimento for trumpet, trombone and piano

Boris Blacher
(1903-1975)

Allegro

Andantino

Presto

Moderato

Allegretto

Ohne Bezeichnung

Presto

Born in Manchuria, Boris Blacher spent his youth in China and eastern Russia. When he was nineteen, he went to Berlin to study architecture, but wound up in music. After his years as a student, he worked as an arranger and composer and developed a successful career until, in the 1930s, the Nazi cultural policy found his teaching and composition not apt for its aesthetic ideals. After the war, however, he resumed composing and teaching; he subsequently held numerous prestigious positions and received significant awards.

Unlike the works of some of his contemporaries, his music is pleasing, accessible and well-written. This Divertimento for trumpet, trombone and piano is composed in numerous short movements, each with a distinctive character. Blacher's general style is rhythmically diverse and jazzy. The overall design of the work is quite clever. The first, fourth (or middle), and final movements are all for the three instruments, while the other four movements feature just two instruments in varying combinations. As the listener meanders through the entire work, they encounter a different tone color at each turn.

The opening movement, *Allegro*, is a lesson in imitation. As it opens, the trombone imitates the trumpet one measure later. It seems to catch up for a moment in the middle. In the closing section, the trombone begins by lagging behind, but then suddenly takes the lead until the end. The movement is full of clever syncopations, particularly when the piano plays four beats to the measure against three in the brass instruments!

The second and third movements are accompanied solos for the trombone and trumpet, respectively. The second, *Andantino*, is a lyrical bluesy melody for the trombone accompanied by the piano, which plays a harmonically rich accompaniment. The third movement, *Presto*, has quick and oft-repeated rhythmic motifs for the trumpet while the piano again emphasizes syncopated off-beats. The fourth movement, *Moderato*, brings the trumpet and trombone together in parallel phrases while the piano has its own melodic ideas over a steady "walking" bass in the left hand. Later in the movement, there is more syncopation between the piano and the brass instruments before it ends with a real blues chord in the piano.

The fifth movement, *Allegretto*, is for the two brass instruments without piano. In this diminutive movement the instruments exchange ideas; for example, in the first four measures the trombone has quick rhythms with lots of repeated notes while the trumpet has a more melodic passage. In the second four measures, they exchange parts. For those listeners who have studied some theory, this is classical double counterpoint. The sixth movement is a solo for the piano, often moody, dark and dissonant, but with some distinctive syncopations which make the two hands seem disjointed. The closing *Presto* opens with the two brass instruments again imitating one another. There is great variety of textures and cross-rhythms among all three instruments in this intricate movement. It ends with a paradoxically simple and quiet cadence in the piano alone.

Colored Glass

Grace Hale
(b. 1998)

Refract
Prisma
Mirage
Chroma

Grace Hale provided this background on *Colored Glass*:

Colored Glass is about grief and the brave, fragile reawakening to the world's beauty, wonder, and enduring goodness after such grief. It grew from fleeting moments: watching light scatter into rainbow shapes across a room or hearing distant church bells ringing. These moments have a way of stopping us in our tracks, evoking an awe that claims us completely. They are quiet gifts, their magic lying in their transience. A rainbow never lingers, and the bells mark time's passage, reminding us that magic itself can reflect the fleeting nature of our own lives. Between these two forces—wonder and mortality—the piece lives.

The creation of *Colored Glass* came after a brief hiatus from music altogether. After a period of intense pressure, ramen noodles, and sleepless nights, I confessed to a friend, "I don't want music to be my entire life. I want it to be a reflection of my life." As if the universe heard me, I was whisked away on a one-way flight to care for my grandparents during a medical scare. My nights were spent dancing with them in the living room, sharing stories and laughter for hours over a couple bottles of wine, tending to them and the household, and simply inhabiting the gift of each day. Over the course of two years, I rebuilt my life in their small town in Idaho, surrounded by love and abundance in every form (a couple new Idahoan friends are here in the audience tonight). Even though I wasn't composing, I began to realize that I was immersed in the very "pixie dust" from which music is born. My grandparents' stories of grief and loss, juxtaposed with the light that shone in their eyes despite it all, became a constant, living inspiration. My new life turned out to be fertile soil in which *Colored Glass* was formed.

Colored Glass unfolds in four movements. I. "Refract" begins by simply setting the magical tone. It suggests that magic exists everywhere, yet a grief-stricken protagonist perceives it only in fragments as light refracting across the room, scattering rainbows. It ends unsettled, as this whisper of wonder has not yet fully reached her. II. "Prisma" is a dreamscape: she is transported to an enchanted world of faerie, strange markets, and vivid landscapes, until a grief-shaped villain emerges. The movement builds to a surreal climax that shatters the dream and wakes her. III. "Mirage" returns to grief, where dream and reality blur. A lost loved one appears like a ghost, offering brief solace before urging her to move on, then disappearing as her hope is reborn. IV. "Chroma" is a celebration: light, playful, and alive. It breaks the fourth wall, inviting the audience to find their own spirit of colorful magic.

Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 32

Anton Arensky
(1861-1906)

Allegro moderato
Scherzo: Allegro molto
Elegia: Adagio
Finale: Allegro non troppo

Anton Arensky was the son of two musical parents and a child prodigy in his own right. He studied piano with his mother from early childhood and remained an active pianist throughout his life. His earliest written compositions appeared when he was nine years old. When he was eighteen, he became a student of Rimsky-Korsakov at the St. Petersburg Conservatory and three years later received a job at the Moscow Conservatory as a professor of harmony and counterpoint. He taught there until 1895 when he moved back to St. Petersburg to take over directorship of the Imperial Chapel and to succeed Balakirev, one of the celebrated Russian nationalists known as the "Mighty Five." Thereafter, he began to produce

compositions which were well-received. Unfortunately, he had addictions to gambling and drinking, and his life eventually became “disordered.” He succumbed to tuberculosis in his 47th year.

Arensky’s style is often derivative. At times his music sounds like Chopin, at other times, when the Russian spirit hits, like Tchaikovsky. In spite of Arensky’s eclectic style, his music is still distinctive and has terrific appeal. His melodies are facile and fluent. His textures, “the ways in which the various instruments seem to be woven together,” are always skillful, clear, and pleasing.

The Trio in D minor for piano, violin and cello, completed in 1894, is dedicated to the memory of Charles Davidoff, a cello virtuoso who had been director of the St. Petersburg conservatory while Arensky was a student there. Arensky’s impeccable craftsmanship can be heard in the first few pages of the first movement. It opens with the piano providing an accompaniment for the first melody which is heard in the violin playing in its lowest registers. Soon the cello enters and the two strings pursue a brief dialogue, building up to a stunning climax for all three instruments. And this is just a beginning to a magnificent movement which is replete with dynamic interplay between the three instruments.

The second movement, a *Scherzo*, literally a joke, opens with a little stuttering figure in the strings achieved by using *spiccato* (bouncing the bow on the string). This soon develops into a more full-blown melody, always accompanied by flying scales and sparkling figurations in the piano. The center section of the movement, the “trio,” is a rich and sonorous waltz which provides a major change of character from the *Scherzo*. A return to the opening music closes the movement.

The third movement, the celebrated “Elegy” in honor of the dedicatee, opens with a languid and tragic melody in the cello. Arensky’s heart-felt homage to Davidoff is elegantly expressed in this fine-wrought melody. There is a celestial section in the middle where the cello plays a little motif *pizzicato* and the violin answers in a very high range; the piano plays high figures adding to the heavenly effect. The movement ends with a repeat of the opening elegiac melody.

The fourth movement, a Finale marked *Allegro non troppo*, opens with an exhilarating new melody in the two strings with dramatic piano accompaniment. This powerful theme then alternates with a return to the “Elegy” melody from the third movement. Toward the end, there is a clear return to the “celestial” music from the middle of the “Elegy” before a final outburst of the opening theme of the movement.

UPCOMING SUMMER MUSIC FESTIVAL EVENTS

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Music at Midday

June 26, 12:15 p.m. - Packard Hall, free

Festival Orchestra Pre-Concert Lecture

June 26, 5:45 p.m. - CAC Screening Room, free

Festival Orchestra Concert

June 26, 7 p.m. - Celeste Theatre



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