

This Season's Featured Composer



Roman Stolyar (b. Dec 6, 1967) is often called one of key figures in Russian improvised music. He has performed in 27 countries, collaborating with a number of internationally renowned improvisers, including Dominic Duval, William Parker, Vinny Golya, Oliver Lake, Susan Allen, Thomas Buckner, Weasel Walter, Assif Tsahar, Martin Kuchen, Glen Hall, and many others. His improvisational workshops have garnered him an

international reputation, and have led to many invitations to create and implement workshops for organizations and universities around the world, including the University of Michigan, Mannes College NY, the California Institute of the Arts, Music Academy Basel, Chateau d'Oex Music School in Switzerland, Frescobaldi State Conservatory in Ferrara, Italy and the Versailles Conservatory, France.

He is an author of the first Russian book on teaching free improvisation. Being actively involved into theatrical activity, he has composed music for more than 35 theater shows, working with leading drama directors of Russia: Alexander Galibin, Boris Pavlovich, Veniamin Filshinsky, Yelena Nevezhina, Larisa Alexandrova, Vera Popova, and many others. He is also an active participant of series of inclusive theater projects, working with blind actors and autistic people. He is periodically composing on commission for various collectives of Novosibirsk State Philharmonics. Roman Stolyar is a member of Russian Composers Union and International Association of Schools of Jazz and an Advisory Board member of the International Society for Improvised Music.

The WPO will perform Stolyar's *Butcha, Lamento for Orchestra* at our concert on October 30, 2022.

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Aram Khachaturian (June 6, 1903 – May 1, 1978) was born in what is now Tbilisi, Georgia, in Russia. He is best known for his Piano Concerto (1936) and his ballet *Gayane* (1942), which includes the popular, rhythmically stirring *Sabre Dance*.

Khachaturian composed the first Armenian ballet music, symphony, concerto, and film score. He is considered the most renowned Armenian composer of the 20th century. While following the established musical traditions of Russia, he broadly incorporated Armenian and, to a lesser extent, Caucasian, Eastern

and Central European, and Middle Eastern peoples' folk music in his works. He is highly regarded in Armenia, where he is considered a national treasure.

Khachaturian was born to an Armenian family; his first experiences of music were the folk songs of his mother and of his hometown of Tiflis (later Tbilisi). He was later trained at the Gnesin State Musical and Pedagogical Institute in Moscow and at the Moscow Conservatory and was a professor at both schools from 1951.

As a young composer, he was influenced by contemporary Western music, particularly that of Maurice Ravel. In his *Symphony No. 1* (1935) and later works, this influence was supplanted by a growing appreciation of folk traditions, not only those of his Armenian forebears but also those of Georgia, Russia, Turkey, and Azerbaijan. His *Symphony No. 2* (1943) was written for the 25th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. His other works include a symphonic suite, *Masquerade* (1944; from incidental music for a play by Mikhail Lermontov); the ballets *Happiness* (1939) and *Spartak* (1953; "Spartacus"); a Third Symphony; a violin concerto (1940); a cello concerto (1946); and numerous shorter works. He also composed the music for the Armenian national anthem as well as film scores and incidental music.

The WPO will perform Khachaturian's *Concerto for Flute and Orchestra* with soloist Rachel Braude at our concert on October 30, 2022.

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Robert Volkmann (April 6, 1815 – October 30, 1883) was born in Lommatzsch near Meissen, Germany. His father, a music director for a church, trained him in music to prepare him as a successor. Volkmann learned to play the organ and the piano and studied violin and cello; by age 12, he was playing the cello part in string quartets by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.

In 1832, he entered the Freiberg Gymnasium for the purpose of becoming a teacher. There he studied music with August Ferdinand Anacker, who encouraged him to devote himself to music more fully. From there he went on to Leipzig in 1836 to study with Carl Ferdinand Becker. In Leipzig, he met Robert Schumann who encouraged him in his studies. They met again several times after that.

When he finished his studies, he began working as voice teacher at a music school in Prague. He did not stay there long, and in 1841 he moved to Budapest, where he was employed as a piano teacher and a reporter for the *Allgemeine Wiener Musik-Zeitung*.

After a short period of freelance work, he became the choirmaster and organist of a Reform synagogue in 1848. He composed in virtual obscurity until 1852, when his *Piano Trio in B-flat minor* caught the ears of Franz Liszt and Hans von Bülow, who proceeded to play it several times all over Europe. In 1854, Volkmann moved to Vienna, only to return to Budapest in 1858.

While visiting Vienna in 1864, Volkmann became acquainted with Johannes Brahms, and they became close friends. In letters they addressed each other as "lieber Freund" ("dear friend").

From the 1870s Volkmann slowed down and composed very little. From 1875 until his death, he was professor of harmony and counterpoint at Budapest's National Academy of Music, where Liszt was the director. Volkmann died in Budapest aged 68.

The WPO will perform Volkmann's *Symphony No. 1* at our concert on October 30, 2022.

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Juan Crisóstomo Arriaga (Jan 27, 1806 – Jan 17, 1826) was a Spanish Basque composer. He was nicknamed "The Spanish Mozart" after he died, because, like Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, he was both a child prodigy and accomplished composer who died young. They also shared the same birthday, fifty years apart.

His father was a church organist and, with his income as a merchant, supported Juan's prodigious musical talent. At the age of 15, Juan began to study violin at the Paris

Conservatoire. He eventually began teaching and was highly praised both by fellow students and other faculty. His mentors were impressed by his use of sophisticated harmonies, counterpoint, and fugue with minimal or no formal instruction.

Among his greatest works are three string quartets, which contain notably Spanish ethnic rhythmic and melodic elements.

The intensity of his musical commitment meteoric rise may have taken a toll on his health: he died in Paris ten days before his 20th birthday, of a lung ailment (possibly tuberculosis), or exhaustion, perhaps both. He was buried in an unmarked grave at the Cimetière du Nord in Montmartre. Thanks to the Spanish Embassy, since 1977 there has been a plaque marking the house at 314 rue Saint-Honoré in memory of the composer. Arriaga's early death is considered a loss not just to Basque culture but also to Spanish music and, by extension, European classical music as a whole. A public theatre in his home city of Bilbao carries his name.

The WPO will perform Arriaga's *Overture Los Esclavos Felices* from his lost opera at our concert on March 26, 2023.

This Season's Featured Composer



José Silvestre White Lafitte (Jan 17, 1836 - Mar 15, 1918) also known as Joseph White, was a Cuban-French violinist and composer. His father was Spanish, and his mother was Afro-Cuban.

White was first trained by his father, an amateur violinist, and gave his first concert at age 18.

He was accompanied by the visiting American pianist-composer Louis Moreau Gottschalk, who encouraged

him to pursue further studies in Paris. White studied at the Paris Conservatory, initially with Jean-Delphin Alard, between the years 1855 and 1871, winning the 1856 First Grand Prize. He became a French citizen in 1870, and was highly praised by Rossini.

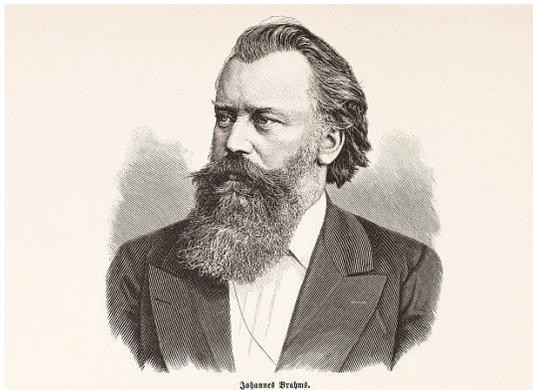
From 1877 to 1889 White was director of the Imperial Conservatory in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where he served as court musician for the Emperor Pedro II. In 1889 he returned to Paris where he taught violin, composed music, and performed concerts. The famous 1737 "Swansong" Stradivari was his instrument. Some of his more famous students were Jacque Thibaud and George Enescu.

White's output comprised some 30 works, including a virtuosic Violin Concerto in F# Minor, La Bella Cubana (a habanera for two violins and orchestra), La Jota Aragonesa (Op.5), and several sets of violin études.

José White died in Paris on March 12, 1918 at age 82. In 1958, Cuba issued a postage stamp with his likeness to honor him.

The WPO will perform White's *Violin Concerto*, featuring soloist Victor Romanul, at our concert on March 26, 2023.

This Season's Featured Composer



Johannes Brahms (May 7, 1833 – April 3, 1897)

was a German composer and pianist of the Romantic period, who wrote symphonies, concerti, chamber music, piano works, choral compositions, and more than 200 songs. Brahms was the great master of symphonic and sonata style in the second half of the 19th century.

The son of Jakob Brahms, a horn and double bass player, Johannes showed early promise as a pianist. He first studied music with his father and, at age seven, was sent

for piano lessons. Between ages 14 and 16 Brahms earned money to help his family by playing in rough inns in the dock area of Hamburg and meanwhile composing and sometimes giving recitals. In 1850 he met Eduard Reményi, a Jewish Hungarian violinist, with whom he gave concerts and from whom he learned about Roma music—an influence that remained with him.

Between 1857 and 1860 Brahms moved between the court of Detmold—where he taught the piano and conducted a choral society—and Göttingen, while in 1859 he was appointed conductor of a women's choir in Hamburg. Such posts provided valuable practical experience and left him enough time for his own work. At this point Brahms's productivity increased, and, apart from the two Serenades for orchestra and the first String Sextet in B-flat Major, he also completed his turbulent Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Minor.

The year 1868 he completed his most famous choral work, *Ein deutsches Requiem* (A German Requiem), which had occupied him since his friend, composer Robert Schumann's, death. In 1869 he offered two volumes of Hungarian Dances for piano duet; these were brilliant arrangements of Roma tunes he had collected over the years. Their success was phenomenal, and they were played all over the world. By 1872 he was principal conductor of the Society of Friends of Music (Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde), and for three seasons he directed the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. Also, by the 1870s Brahms was writing significant chamber works and was moving with great deliberation along the path to purely orchestral composition.

Gradually Brahms's renown spread beyond Germany and Austria. His concert tours to other countries were greatly appreciated, and won great acclaim. Brahms remained in Vienna for the rest of his life. He resigned as director of the Society of Friends of Music in 1875, and from then on devoted his life almost solely to composition. When he went on concert tours, he conducted or performed (on the piano) only his own works. He maintained a few close personal friendships and remained a lifelong bachelor.

Brahms became seriously ill in 1896; he appeared for the last time at a concert in March 1897, and in Vienna, in April 1897, he died of cancer at age 64.

The WPO will perform Brahms's *Symphony No. 1* at our concert on March 26, 2023.

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Edmée Sophie Gail (August 28, 1775 – July 24, 1819) was born in Paris and showed musical talent as a singer and composer from a young age. The start of the French Revolution coincided with the publication of Gail's first songs in magazines, and Gail was able to continue work as a singer and composer throughout that tumultuous period. She studied voice, theory, and composition in Paris,

the latter with François-Joseph Fétis, who later dedicated a Mass to her. She published songs throughout her life, had five operas premiered, and toured Europe as a singer and accompanist.

Gail's compositional output is reflected in part by 53 manuscripts of her works. Though she published a lot of chansons in music magazines and periodicals, most of her music is in the form of manuscript copies. Her first opera, *Les deux jaloux*, which premiered on March 27, 1813 by the Opéra-Comique in Paris, was her most successful opera. Gail's most popular song was "Celui qui sut toucher mon coeur," a chanson d'une Tyrolienne that can be found in libraries in Austria, Belgium, Germany, and the United States.

Gail died in Paris on July 24, 1819 at the age of 44 and was buried at Père-Lachaise Cemetery.

The WPO will perform Gail's *Overture to Les Deux Jaloux* at our concert on May 21, 2023.

This Season's Featured Composer



Emmanuel Feldman (b. 1965) is an American classical cellist and teacher based in Boston. He is the co-founder of the cello-double bass duo Cello e Basso, and a member of the Aurea Ensemble. He studied at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and at the Conservatoire de Paris.

As part of completing his studies in Paris, Feldman joined l'Orchestre des Prix, and was the first American to play in the orchestra. He moved to Boston, where he became the principal cellist in the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra in 1990, at the age of 23.

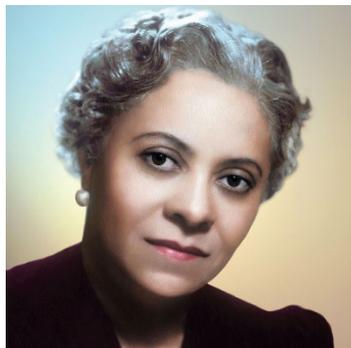
In 1992, Feldman and his wife Pascale Delache-Feldman formed Axiom Duo, with Feldman on cello and Delache-Feldman on double bass. As pioneers of the cello-double bass combination, they had to devise their own music by writing original pieces and transcribing music from other composers to fit their low-pitched instruments.

As a composer, Feldman's original compositions include the three-movement *Enigma No. 1* written for cello and bass, and *Synergy*, written for string orchestra.

Feldman has performed as the principal cellist in the Boston Philharmonic and Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra; as a soloist with the Nashville Chamber Orchestra, Emmanuel Music, the New Bedford Symphony Orchestra, New England String Ensemble, and many other groups, including the Waltham Philharmonic Orchestra. He is a faculty member at Boston's New England Conservatory, and at the Department of Music at Tufts University, and has also taught cello at Brown University and UMass Dartmouth.

The WPO will perform Feldman's cello concerto, *Standing Tall*, at our concert on May 21, 2023.

This Season's Featured Composer



Florence Beatrice Price (née Smith; April 9, 1887 – June 3, 1953) was an American classical composer, pianist, organist and music teacher. Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, Price was educated at the New England Conservatory of Music, and was active in Chicago from 1927 until her death in 1953. Price is noted as the first African-American woman to be recognized as a symphonic composer, and the first to have a composition played by a major orchestra. She composed over 300 works: four

symphonies, four concertos, choral works, art songs, and music for chamber and solo instruments. In 2009, a substantial collection of her works and papers was found in her abandoned summer home.

Price was born in Little Rock, Arkansas. Her father was the only African-American dentist in the city, and her mother was a music teacher who guided Florence's early musical training. She gave her first piano performance at the age of four and had her first composition published at the age of 11.

In 1902, she enrolled in the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston with a double major in organ and piano teaching. There she studied composition and counterpoint with composers George Chadwick and Frederick Converse. Also while there, she wrote her first string trio and symphony. She graduated in 1906 with honors.

In 1910, she returned to Arkansas, where she taught briefly, and moved to Atlanta, Georgia. There she became the head of the music department of what is now Clark Atlanta University, a historically Black college, and in 1927 moved north in the Great Migration and settled in Chicago. There she began her composition career as part of the Chicago Black Renaissance.

Price's First Symphony was played by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1933, making her the first African-American woman to have her music played by a major U.S. orchestra. In 1940, she was inducted into the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers. Price's music consists of mostly the American idiom and reveals her Southern roots. She used sounds and ideas that fit the reality of urban society, and also used the music of the African-American church as material for her arrangements. The weaving of tradition and modernism reflect the way of life for African Americans in large cities at the time.

The WPO will perform Price's *Symphony No. 1* at our concert on May 21, 2023.