

Wilhelm Friedemann Bach (1710 – 1784)
Sonata no. 1 in E minor, BWV B 17 (1780)

The eldest son of Johann Sebastian Bach, WF Bach is known as a composer and virtuoso organist. He wrote many works for keyboard, as well as chamber, orchestral, and church music.

Bach's flute sonata consists of 3 contrasting movements: Allegro ma non tanto, Siciliano, and Vivace. As is common in Baroque music, each movement is made up of many reiterations of just a few ideas. Each time a musical thought comes back it is expressed with slight differences that make it both familiar and new. Additionally, there is often room in Baroque pieces for the performer to add musical embellishments of their own. All in all, this gives the opportunity to take a piece that is over 200 years old and present it in a way that has never been heard.

Robert Muczynski (1929 – 2010)
Duos for two Flutes, op. 34 (1973)

Muczynski was an American composer, pianist, and teacher, best known for his chamber music and piano works. His compositional style largely fits into the neo-classical stream, with elements of romanticism and a flair uniquely his own. His music is abstract and concise while still containing a wide range of emotion and harmonic color.

Duos for flutes is a collection of 6 different movements, each having a character of its own and alternating between slow and quick. The slow movements consist of haunting harmonies and obscure rhythms. In contrast, the faster movements are light, quirky, and fun! Muczynski utilizes alternating meter and unexpected placement of musical emphasis to keep the quick duets spinning forward until the end. While this was a late addition to this program, I have found it to be an apt musical commentary on the past 5 months: either slow and uncertain, or racing with surprises at every bend. Thankfully at least, this particular life roller-coaster has not been a solo ride, and it will never cease to amaze me how even a strange melody can become beautiful with the addition of just one more voice.

Valerie Coleman (b. 1970)
Danza de la Mariposa, for Solo Flute (2011)

Both composer and flutist, Coleman grew up in Kentucky and by the age of 14 had already written 3 full-length symphonies and won local and state flute competitions. She is best known for her contributions to the chamber music repertoire, and as founder and member of the wind quintet Imani Winds.

Danza de la Mariposa is a Melodic and rhythmic tone poem that depicts the dance and flight of a South American butterfly. This piece moves between syncopated dance-like sections and a slower Yaravi, or Peruvian lament song. The melodic imagery and extended techniques

throughout help this bring musical tapestry to life. For me personally, this piece speaks of hope. Proverbs 13:12 says ‘Hope delayed makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life’. So often when we are waiting for something to change, we waver back and forth between discouragement that it will never happen, and hope that maybe, just maybe, it will.

Philippe Gaubert (1879 – 1941)
Madrigal for Flute and Piano (1908)

Gaubert was a french flautist, conductor, composer, and the most celebrated student of Paul Taffanel. He won competitions both as a performer and composer early in his career, and he went on to write music in many different genres including opera, orchestral works, and even songs. Through his life he held positions playing with the Paris Opéra and Société des Concerts orchestras, conducting those same ensembles, and teaching as professor of flute at the Conservatoire.

The Madrigal is an oft performed work from the flute repertoire, embodying Gaubert’s style in a piece that is short yet beautiful. Rhythms and harmonies between the flute and piano create a softness that, while clear, is without any harsh edges. This together with the long, flowing lines of the melody exude a sense of peace and calm throughout the whole piece.

Sergei Prokofiev (1891 – 1953)
Sonata op. 94, for Flute and Piano (1942)

Summing up the life of Prokofiev is no easy task. After spending his childhood in pre-revolutionary Russia, he spent nearly two decades abroad in the US and Europe before returning to Russia. The influence of his Russian heritage can be heard clearly throughout his compositional output, blending together with styles of modernism and neo-classicism. His final years in Russia were tumultuous from cultural restrictions and oppression over his music. After over a decade as a lead composer in Soviet culture, he began to face severe criticism of his work and even censorship, forcing a major shift in his writing over the last years of his life.

Prokofiev’s Flute Sonata is a stunning work full of elegance and grandeur in four distinct movements. The first movement is diverse in its musical themes, at one moment sweet and gentle, and the next very militaristic. This movement in particular sounds like it would be at home in one of Prokofiev’s ballets, with each new motif representing a different character on stage. Movement two is a Scherzo bringing a playful, almost mischievous note to the story, followed by a beautiful slow movement. The fourth and final movement closes out this sonata with a flair. Between the strong, insistent melodies and the sweeping gestures in both flute and piano, the finale drives onward to a victorious close. There is much more I could say regarding my own interpretation of this piece, but I will leave it with an invitation to create your own story as you listen.