

# Music @ St. Alban's

*Sunday Concerts in Davidson*

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*Concert Notes – February 21, 2021*  
*Earle Cheshire-Wood*

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**Suite Hellénique (Kalamatianos, Valse, Kritis)**

**Pedro Iturralde (1929-2020)**

Pedro Iturralde was a Spanish saxophonist who learned from his father, performed professionally by age eleven and later led his own quartet that combined aspects of jazz and flamenco. Despite this, Iturralde has said “*Lo que yo hice no era fusión. Si unes jazz y flamenco, uno de los dos muere*”, meaning “What I did was not fusion. If you join jazz and flamenco, one of the two dies”. His piece *Suite Hellénique* was composed for piano and saxophone around 2001. Iturralde passed away last year in Madrid, but his timeless compositions live on through musicians today.

**Elegie “In Memory of Aram Khachaturian”**

**Arno Babajanian (1921-1983)**

Babajanian wrote this piece in memory of Aram Khachaturian, the composer who, after seeing his talent as a young child, proposed that he be given proper musical training. Babajanian was an Armenian Soviet who toured the Soviet Union and Europe performing various concerts. He was even named a People’s Artist of the USSR. Both Babajanian and Khachaturian were Armenian, and much of the music they composed drew from the country’s folklore and folk music. *Elegie* was originally written for solo piano in 1978 and added to his successes and numerous awards received from the USSR and Armenian SSR.

**Danza de la Moza Donosa (from *Danzas Argentinas* Op.2, No.2)**

**Alberto Ginastera (1916-1983)**

*Danza de la Moza Donosa* translates to “Dance of the Beautiful Maiden”. Ginastera composed this as a soft, pleasant dance for solo piano in 6/8 time. Similar to Babajanian, he pulls ideas from folklore of his home country. The harmonization creates a wide expanse - think the grasslands of Argentina - because this piece was created during his self-proclaimed period of “Objective Nationalism”. The dance ends on a tonal chord, leaving the listener with uncertainty. The progressive rock group Emerson, Lake & Palmer adapted several of Ginastera’s pieces. When the group met with Ginastera, he admitted to them: “You have captured the essence of my music, and no one's ever done that before”.

**Sonata for Trumpet and Piano (II. *Allegretto*)**

**Eric Ewazen (b. 1954)**

Eric Ewazen's *Sonata for Trumpet and Piano* was published only a couple decades ago in 1995. Ewazen studied under several teachers while attending the Eastman School of Music and The Juilliard School, where he received numerous prizes and awards. His father played the harmonica and taught traditional Ukrainian dances that later served as inspiration for Ewazen's work. Ewazen's compositions have gone on to be performed across the globe in several major orchestras such as the Cleveland Orchestra and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, to name only a couple.

### **Valses nobles et sentimentales, No. 2**

#### **Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)**

Maurice Ravel held status as a socialite, which encouraged his affinity for Viennese waltzes like these. Published in 1911, this suite of waltzes was first performed at a sort of quiz show where the audience was instructed to guess the composer of the piece, although no one guessed this one correctly. Franz Schubert was the writer of this score, but Ravel played his waltzes some 75 years later. Ravel decided to dedicate this piece to the "delicious and ageless pleasure of a useless occupation".

### **Sinfonia to Il Giardino di Amore (Allegro, Largo, Allegro)**

#### **Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725)**

Known for his works written for operas, Scarlatti was an Italian Baroque composer who came from a family of singers and musicians. Scarlatti was even able to enjoy the patronage of Ferdinando de' Medici when he was composing operas for him. During this time, Scarlatti resolved to settle in Rome and his work became more complex, namely with the enrichment of his symphonies. It can be argued that his great success and popularity was in part due to his sister's being a mistress of an influential Neapolitan noble. Nevertheless, the extent of his influence and connections with patrons proves his talent played a larger role.

## Program notes written by Earle Cheshire-Wood

Earle is a youth member on the board for Music at Saint Alban's. She lives in Davidson and is a junior at North Mecklenburg High School. She has played the viola for over five years, performing in several youth orchestra events across the southeast, and has recently picked up the drums. Earle's favorite things include discovering new music, fashion, ice-skating, her pit bull named Pickles, and running for her school's track and cross-country teams.

## Program Notes by Cynthia Lawing

### ***Elegie, (in memory of Aram Katchaturian) by Arno Babajanian (1921-1983)***

Babajanian was born in Armenia. His father, a mathematician, was an excellent flautist of Armenian folk music. By the age of five his talent was discovered by fellow Armenian Aram Katchaturian (1903-1978) who suggested formal musical training for him. Hence at age 7 he was enrolled in the Yerevan Komitas Music Conservatory, and later continued his musical training at the Moscow Conservatory. Babajanian was born shortly after the Bolsheviks rose to power in Russia. Armenia fell to Soviet rule, but the musical tradition survived.

### ***Danza de la Moza Donosa, from Danzas Argentinas Op. 2, no. 2 by Alberto Ginastera (1916-1983)***

A suite of three dances. *Danza de la Moza Donosa*, is placed between No. 1 *Dance of the Old Herdsman* (a work of dissonance with the left hand on black keys and right hand on white keys) and No. 3 *Dance of the Outlaw Cowboy* (with the composer's remark to be played furiously and violently.) Thus the *Dance of the Girl from Donosa* with the gentle quality serves as a buffer and an oasis.

These works are not what we understand to be dances, with prescribed steps and choreography; rather, the music presents a picture of Ginastera's native land, the cowboys on horseback, the vast expanse of the pampas, or plain, and the cops and robbers chase scene. The writing also reflects some of the pieces that made an indelible impression upon him as a youngster, namely, Debussy's *La Mer* and Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*.

### ***Valses nobles et sentimentales, No. 2 by Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)***

Ravel's fondness of paying homage to historic composers extends to this suite of dances. The title is borrowed from Schubert's two volumes of dances titled *Noble and Sentimental Waltzes*. Aside from the title, the resemblance ends there since the musical content is vastly different in its complexity, idioms and character. This particular work, No. 2, is one of the slowest in the collection, and reflects a certain melancholia. The incessant repetition of broken octaves reminds one of the ticking of a clock, of time passing. The music depicts so well dance scenes in the Great Depression era dance marathons when participation meant food, lodging and cash for the dancers. Utterly exhausted and sleep deprived, dancers would take turns napping on the dance partners while being held up so the knees would not hit the ground for instant disqualification. And time dragged on, ever so slowly...

## Program Notes by William Lawing

Eric Ewazen is a longtime member of the composition faculty at The Juilliard School. A prolific composer, his music for brass is often performed. It is fair to say that his *Sonata for Trumpet and Piano* was the most significant addition to the solo repertoire for trumpet in fifty years. His understanding of the instrument is unsurpassed. The second movement is a rare opportunity for trumpeters to display their lyrical abilities. It is in three distinct sections, and it is highlighted by the wonderful dialogue between the two instruments. It is quite likely my favorite slow movement of all my trumpet repertoire.

The heyday of the solo literature for trumpet was in the 17th and 18th centuries, when it was the object of hundreds of simple 3-movement works known variously as sonatas, concerti, overtures, and sinfonias. They served both as opening events to major church feast days, and as overtures to operas. *Il Giardino di Amore (The Garden of Love)* is an opera by Alessandro Scarlatti, the most celebrated opera composer of his time. As is typical, the trumpet is featured in the outer movements, while the slow middle section is written for the other instruments. The piano part is a reduction from the original strings and continuo.

The performance of the *Suite Hellenique (Hellenic Suite)* has made its own international journey. The composition is based upon Grecian melodies, was written by a Spanish composer, and was conceived for soprano saxophone. It is rare for a composition intended for saxophone to transfer to trumpet successfully, but this is a piece of great fun that works equally well for trumpet. The opening of the last movement, which falls nicely upon the fingers of a saxophonist, is an especially enjoyable trumpet challenge.