

## **Franz von Suppé (1819-1895)**

### **Poet and Peasant Overture**

A master of light opera, Franz von Suppé is often considered the Viennese counterpart to composers such as Jacques Offenbach and Gilbert and Sullivan. Born to parents of Austrian descent in what is now Croatia (at the time part of the Austrian Empire), Suppé studied law but had demonstrated an early talent and interest in music. He later moved to Vienna where he studied music with Simon Sechter, who also mentored Anton Bruckner. Suppé established himself as a successful composer and conductor in Vienna. He wrote nearly 50 operettas and was skilled at blending catchy melodies with theatrical flair.

While his operettas are not as well-known today, their overtures—brimming with drama, lyricism, and exuberance—have secured a lasting place in the concert repertoire. Among these, *Poet and Peasant* (*Dichter und Bauer*), composed in 1846 as the introduction to his operetta of the same name, is one of his most frequently performed works. This vibrant overture has also appeared in pop-culture, including many times over in classic Looney Toons cartoons and as the “Spinach Overture” in the cartoon Popeye the Sailor.

Unlike the often more serious nature of operas, operettas tend to be lighthearted, playful, and comical. *Poet and Peasant* tells the story of a broken-hearted poet as he vacations in the countryside, a city person among country folk. The overture mirrors the operetta’s central theme: the contrast between lofty artistic ideals and the lively rhythms of everyday life. The opening from the brass leads into a noble and expressive cello solo with harp accompaniment. This reflective introduction soon gives way to an enthusiastic, march-like theme and dance, bursting with vitality, that then leads into a waltz. The overture shifts between these expressive and animated passages, eventually building toward its spirited finale.

- *Jennifer Reid (Edited)*

## **Edward Elgar (1857-1934)**

### **Enigma Variations: Theme + Variations I-IX**

The story goes that after a long, grueling day of teaching, Elgar returned home and sat at his piano and began improvising a melody. His wife Alice was struck by the tune and as the evening continued he began improvising variations to go with the melody. In his exhaustion and playfulness with Alice he began including characteristics of several of his friends and colleagues in the variations. He sent what he had written to his publisher August Jaeger, himself an inspiration for one of the variations, with the following note: “I have sketched a set of Variations ... on an original theme: the Variations have amused me because I’ve labeled ‘em with the nicknames of my particular friends—you are Nimrod.”

To whom each variation refers, and why, is clearly outlined in Elgar’s words; the “enigma” however, is a mystery for the ages. Elgar succeeded at the very definition of the word, made most clear by this note that accompanied the work to its first annotator: “The Variations should stand simply as a piece of music. I will not explain. Its ‘dark saying’ must be left

unguessed, and I warn you that the apparent connection between the variations and the theme is often of the slightest texture.”

Elgar dedicated his Enigma Variations “to my friends pictured within,” and begins with the theme, followed by fourteen variations. The theme is broken into two parts; the first, a reflective theme in g minor which features the interval of the seventh, a particular favorite of Elgar’s; and the second, in G Major providing a more hopeful and uplifting sensibility. The first nine of the variations will be played for you tonight.

#### **Variation I (L’istesso tempo) “C.A.E.”**

Caroline Alice Elgar, the composer’s wife. Elgar wrote, “The variation is really a prolongation of the theme with what I wished to be romantic and delicate additions; those who knew C.A.E. will understand this reference to one whose life was a romantic and delicate inspiration.”

#### **Variation II (Allegro) “H.D.S.-P.”**

Hew D. Steuart-Powell. Steuart-Powell played piano in Elgar’s trio. Elgar mimics the pianist’s trademark way in which he warmed-up on the piano.

#### **Variation III (Allegretto) “R.B.T.”**

Richard Baxter Townshend, the popular author of A Tenderfoot in Colorado. Elgar imitates his tendency to raise the pitch of his voice when excited.

#### **Variation IV (Allegro di molto) “W.M.B.”**

William Meath Baker. Baker was a country squire with a gruff disposition and a propensity for making hasty exits, often slamming the door when doing so. Elgar says that he would “forcibly read out the arrangements for the day” to his guests.

#### **Variation V (Moderato) “R.P.A.”**

Richard P. Arnold, son of the poet Matthew Arnold. He was a young philosopher who according to Elgar, “His serious conversation was continually broken up by whimsical and witty remarks.”

#### **Variation VI (Andantino) “Ysobel”**

Isabel Fitton, a friend of Elgar who tried to learn the viola under the composer’s tutelage. It seems likely she was not a very good student and ended her lessons stating, “I value our friendship much too much.” The viola is the featured instrument of this variation and contains many string crossings, an homage to Isabel’s struggle with this particular aspect of playing a stringed instrument.

### **Variation VII (Presto) “Troyte”**

Arthur Troyte Griffith, another of Elgar’s less than successful students. According to Elgar, the variation depicts Troyte’s “maladroit essays to play the pianoforte; later the strong rhythm suggests the attempts of the instructor (E.E.) to make something like order out of chaos, and the final despairing ‘slam’ records that the effort proved to be in vain.”

### **Variation VIII (Allegretto) “W.N.”**

Winifred Norbury. This variation is less about Miss Norbury and more about her charming house that Elgar enjoyed so much. It was the site of many musical performances and musician gatherings.

### **Variation IX (Moderato) “Nimrod”**

August Jaeger, Elgar’s publisher and close friend. “Jaeger” is German for “hunter,” and Nimrod is one of the Old Testament’s fiercest hunters. “Nimrod” is the most famous of the variations and is often programmed without the rest of the work. It is most notably used in England for events such as funerals and memorial services, and is always played on Remembrance Sunday, a ceremony acknowledging the sacrifices of British servicemen and women in both World Wars and subsequent conflicts. In the United States, it has often been used for 9/11 tributes.

- *Lori Newman (Edited)*

## **Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)**

### **Fantasia on Greensleeves**

Perhaps more than any other English composer, the music of Ralph Vaughan Williams is inextricably connected to the rich folk song tradition of his native country. Vaughan Williams studied composition and organ at the Royal College of Music in London and earned a doctorate from the University of Cambridge in 1901. He struggled to find his identity as a composer, until he joined the English Folk Dance and Song Society of London. His discovery of this tremendous treasure trove of inspiration prompted him to travel throughout the English countryside, collecting little known tunes from native singers. He also extensively researched the history of English music, taking particular interest in the Tudor period, which took place from 1485-1603. He published his first set of folk songs in 1903 and subsequently incorporated many of them into his own compositions. Vaughan Williams’ original style helped to refresh and redefine contemporary English music, and when Sir Edward Elgar died in 1934, Vaughan Williams assumed the role of England’s leading composer.

The Fantasia on Greensleeves contains two folk tunes that date from the sixteenth century. The short work is set in an ABA form with the first theme being the familiar “Greensleeves” melody that since has become affiliated with the Christmas holiday. The original text that accompanies that famous lilting melody evokes the heartbreak of a lost love:

“Your vows you’ve broken, like my heart,

Oh, why did you so enrapture me?  
Now I remain in a world apart,  
But my heart remains in captivity.”

The middle section is a more stern melody, the tune of a traditional English folk song called “Lovely Joan” that also tells the story of a misguided love:

“Then he pulled off his ring of gold.  
My pretty little miss, do this behold...

And as he made for the pooks (stacks) of hay,  
she leaped on his horse and tore away.  
He called, he called, but it was all in vain,  
Young Joan she never looked back again.”

Vaughan Williams used these melodies in several works, to include the incidental music for *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Richard II* as well as the opera *Sir John in Love*. It was Ralph Greaves who pulled Vaughan William’s work from the opera and arranged this setting, *Fantasia on Greensleeves*.

- *"The President's Own" United States Marine Chamber Orchestra (Edited)*

### **Georges Bizet (1838-1875)**

#### **L'arlésienne Suite No. 2: Farandole**

If you’ve been to see an opera in the last decade or so, chances are pretty decent that it was Georges Bizet’s *Carmen*, which is among the most-staged in the world. But Bizet himself never got to reap the fruits of that glory, though, as it was his untimely death at the age of 37, three months after *Carmen*’s unsuccessful premiere, that spurred a second look at that work and guaranteed his immortality.

In life, Bizet’s career was a curious one. Admitted to the Paris Conservatory at the age of nine, Bizet shot through the halls of that institution, winning more accolades as a student than almost anyone before or since. But the composer and the musical world could never quite seem to get on the same page, and Bizet spent 15 years as a musical odd-jobs man, with opera projects falling through at the last moment, and accompanying and arranging jobs to pay the bills.

Among those musical odd jobs was the composition of incidental music for a new play, a tragic comedy called *L’Arlesienne*, in 1872. The play was a bit of a flop, but Bizet was able to extract some of his music and convert it into suites for performance on the concert stage, and the *Farandole* closes the Second Suite. The *Farandole* borrows its main theme from a medieval French Christmas carol, and has long been a favorite at Holiday-season pops concerts for decades.

- *Chris Vaneman (Edited)*

	<b>Violin I</b>			
	Sarang Narasimhan	2029, Neuroscience		
	Jenny Cui	2026, Human Physiology		
	Joshua Frank	2028, Human Physiology		
	Alyssa Lee	2029, Biology		
	Evan Leong	2028, Data Science		
	Lawrence Miao	Grad 1st Year, Artificial Intelligence		
	Leo Oiwa	2028, Mechanical Engineering		
	Carla Romney			
	Lauren Smith	Grad 3rd Year, Law		
	Justina Wang	2028, Human Physiology		
	Cindy Yao	2029, Biology		
	Claire Zhang	2027, Biological Anthropology		
	Yudi Zhang	2028, Physics and Chemistry		
	<b>Violin II</b>			
	Abby Mercier	2028, Education		
	Leah Bae	2029, Sociology		
	Soyoung Bae	PhD 4th Year, Molecular Biology, Cell Biology, Biochemistry		
	Mariana Durango Bedran	2029, Political Science		
	Elaine Chiu	2026, Music Education		
	Aaron Chu	2028, Computer Science		
	Arantza Cruzado	2029, Undeclared Engineering		
	Peyton Johnson	PhD 1st Year, Physics		
	Michelle Kim	2026, Biochemistry & Molecular Biology		
	Ling Lu	2029, Psychology		
	Anne Thurmel	Grad 2nd Year, Computer Science		
	Erina Yao	2028, CAS Exchange		
	<b>Viola</b>			
	Ethan Wilson	2029, Physics		
	Ambar Garcia	2029, Psychology		
	Julie Labat	2027, Political Science		
	Malac Mahmoud	2028, Health Sciences		
	Brycen Martin	2029, Electrical Engineering		
	Veronica Moy	2029, Business Administration		
	Katie Vongsouvanh	2029, Data Science		
	Brady Xue	2028, Data Science		
	<b>Cello</b>			
	Yasheng Jiang	2027, Physics		

	Amelia Andre	2027, Neuroscience		
	Patrick Gong-Harjula	2028, Biology		
	Ellie Lee	2029, Music BA		
	Jenna Lee	2027, Advertising		
	Sophia Lorenz	2028, Biology		
	John Olaoye	2029, Computer Science		
	Anna Peelen	2029, Advertising		
	Noah Shafer	2027, English		
	Kayla Shechter	BU Academy 3rd Year		
	Frank Yang	2027, Math and Computer Science		
	<b>Bass</b>			
	Julia Glazebnik	2029, Political Science		
	<b>Flute</b>			
	Sarah Chang	2028, Advertising		
	Erin Lee	2029, Education		
	Sara Li	2029, Mechanical Engineering		
	<b>Oboe</b>			
	Angus Black	2027, Astronomy and Physics		
	April Li	Grad 2nd Year, Music Education		
	Barrett Schenk	Alum, 2025 Biomedical Engineering		
	<b>Clarinet</b>			
	Chloe Chung	2029, Biological Anthropology		
	Sanjana Jadhav	2029, Neuroscience		
	<b>Bassoon</b>			
	Andrew Skrzypczak	Grad 1st Year, Mechanical Engineering		
	<b>French Horn</b>			
	Alicia Hamm	2026, Journalism		
	Sandy Shiff	2026, Statistics and Philosophy		
	<b>Trumpet</b>			
	Alex Fu	2029, Mechanical Engineering		
	<b>Percussion</b>			
	Ethan Putlack	Grad 1st Year, Actuarial Science		
	<b>Harp</b>			
	Velana Valdez	2027, Neuroscience and Philosophy		