

Senior Recital Program Notes

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), *Concerto for Clarinet in A Major*

Mozart is one of the most significant figures in Western classical music. Born in Salzburg, Austria, he showed prodigious musical talent from an early age, composing his first piece at just five years old. Over his brief life, he produced an extensive body of work that includes symphonies, operas, chamber music, and choral pieces, characterized by their melodic beauty, formal clarity, and emotional depth. His innovative approach to form and harmony laid the groundwork for the Classical style and influenced countless composers after him. Shortly before Mozart's death, Mozart wrote his Clarinet Concerto, which highlights his mastery of the concerto form. Commissioned for the clarinetist Anton Stadler, a close friend and collaborator, the concerto highlights the instrument's expressive capabilities and technical agility.

Béla Bartók (1881-1945), *Romanian Folk Dances for Clarinet and Piano*

Béla Bartók was a Hungarian composer, ethnomusicologist, and pianist, celebrated as one of the key figures in 20th-century music. Born in Nagyszentmiklós (now Sânnicolau Mare, Romania), Bartók demonstrated musical talent early in life and later studied at the Royal Academy of Music in Budapest. His deep engagement with folk music, particularly that of Eastern Europe, profoundly influenced his compositions. Bartók's fieldwork, which included extensive collection and transcription of folk melodies, allowed him to incorporate traditional elements into his innovative musical language. Composed in 1915, *Romanian Folk Dances* is a suite originally for piano and later arranged for various ensembles, including clarinet and piano. This work features six movements, each drawing from traditional Romanian music that Bartók studied in Transylvania. The piece embodies the lively rhythms and melodic characteristics of Romanian folk dances.

Leonard Bernstein (1910-1990), *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano*

Leonard Bernstein was a transformative figure in American music, renowned as a composer, conductor, and educator. Born in Lawrence, Massachusetts, he displayed prodigious talent early on, ultimately studying at Harvard and the Curtis Institute. Bernstein's diverse oeuvre includes celebrated works in classical music, Broadway, and film, marked by his unique ability to blend various genres. His dynamic conducting style and commitment to music education helped elevate the status of American music on the global stage. Composed between 1941 and 1942, Bernstein's *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano* was written for clarinetist David Oppenheim, who was a prominent musician and a key collaborator with Bernstein. The sonata reflects Bernstein's deep understanding of the clarinet's capabilities and showcases his distinctive blend of classical and American musical styles.

Jabra Latham (b. 1978), *A Short Walk in the Cold*

Jabra Latham is a contemporary composer known for his evocative soundscapes that draw on human experiences and the natural world. His work often explores themes of isolation, connection, and the emotional complexities of everyday life. Latham's unique voice blends

traditional elements with modern techniques, creating immersive musical experiences. "On a Short Walk in the Cold" is a reflective piece that captures the nuances of a brief yet impactful journey. Through its music, Latham conveys the contrasting sensations of coldness and warmth, both literally and metaphorically, inviting listeners to explore their own emotional landscapes.

Erroll Garner (1921-1977), *Misty*

Erroll Garner was an influential American jazz pianist and composer, known for his distinctive style and innovative approach to jazz. Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Garner showed exceptional musical talent from an early age, teaching himself to play piano by ear. His unique blend of swing, lyrical melodies, and a signature use of the octave technique made him a standout performer in the jazz scene. Garner's contributions to jazz are characterized by his ability to create a rich, full sound, often incorporating elements of classical music and blues into his playing. Composed in 1954, "Misty" has become one of Garner's most iconic pieces and a standard in the jazz repertoire. The song, originally written for piano, features a lush, romantic melody paired with harmonies that evoke a sense of longing and introspection. Garner's ability to convey deep emotion through his music is evident in this composition.

Johnny Burke (1908-1964), *Misty*

Johnny Burke was an influential American lyricist known for his contributions to popular music during the mid-20th century. Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, he wrote lyrics for numerous standards that became classics, collaborating with prominent composers of the era. His works often display a romantic and introspective quality, capturing deep emotions and relatable experiences. Burke's talent for crafting memorable lyrics made him a sought-after collaborator in the worlds of jazz and popular music. Burke provided the lyrics to "Misty," turning the instrumental piece into a poignant ballad. The song has since become a jazz standard and is beloved for its evocative imagery and emotional depth.