



This chap has no idea how to write for the fiddle!’ It was the heavenly ladder that Jacob saw in his dream on which Haydn inexorably had his victim climb up and down.” The original sonata has disappeared (Haydn composed no other such duo sonatas), but it seems that the work was re-written for piano trio after he returned home to Vienna in 1795.

Miss Jansen's violin-playing friend might well have been suspicious of this piece even before he played a note — E-flat minor, with its plethora of flatted notes (six out of the possible seven), is virtually unprecedented in the Classical literature and unique in Haydn's instrumental output. The movement's opening section, gently melancholy and elegantly melodic, returns two times (the last time elaborated), with intervening episodes in brighter major keys (the second in the five-sharp key of B major, almost as extraordinary as the work's principal tonality) to produce a pleasingly balanced structure: A–B–A–C–A. The sonata-form second movement, in the more conventional key of E-flat major, challenges the pianist with its technical demands and the violinist with its vertiginous ascents.

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## Trio for Piano, Violin and Cello in E-flat minor, H. XV:31, “Jacob’s Dream”

## Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

*Composed in 1794-1795.*

The Piano Trio in E-flat minor (XV:31) was apparently conceived as a sonata for piano and violin in 1794, during Haydn's second residency in London. In his pioneering study of *Mozart and Haydn in London* (1867), the German musicologist Carl Ferdinand Pohl reported, "In the home of Miss Therese Jansen, Haydn had made the acquaintance of a German musical dilettante. The latter had the habit of always wanting to show off his virtuosity in the highest reaches of the violin. To cure him from such dangerous business, Haydn wrote an apparently easy sonata for piano and violin, entitled 'Jacob's Dream' in which the violin is unnoticeably driven up and up into higher positions.... The fingers, more and more crowded together, raced about like ants. Scratching around, tripping over passages, the sweat of fear on his brow, the amateur broke out in bitter curses. 'Has anyone ever heard such a thing, to smear down such stuff!



*Märchenbilder (Pictures from Fairy Land)*  
for Viola and Piano, Op. 113  
Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

*Composed in 1851.*

In September 1850, the Schumanns left Dresden to take up residence in Düsseldorf, where Robert assumed the post of municipal music director. He was welcomed to the city with a serenade, a concert of his works, a supper and a ball. Though he had been cautioned a few years before by his friend Felix Mendelssohn that the local musicians were a shoddy bunch, he was eager to take on the variety of duties that awaited him in the Rhenish city, including conducting the orchestra's subscription concerts, leading performances of church music, giving private music lessons, organizing a chamber music society, and composing as time allowed. Despite Schumann's promising entry into the musical life of Düsseldorf, it was not long before things turned sour. His fragile mental health, his ineptitude as a conductor, and his frequent irritability created a rift with the musicians, and the orchestra's governing body presented

him with the suggestion that, perhaps, his time would be better devoted entirely to composition. Schumann, increasingly unstable though at first determined to stay, complained to his wife, Clara, that he was being cruelly treated. Proceedings were begun by the orchestra committee to relieve him of his position, but his resignation in 1853 ended the matter. By early the next year, Schumann's reason had completely given way. On February 27th, he tried to drown himself in the Rhine, and a week later he was committed to the asylum in Endenich, where he lingered with fleeting moments of sanity for nearly two-and-a-half years. His faithful Clara was there with him when he died on July 29, 1856, at the age of 46.

Though Schumann's tenure in Düsseldorf proved difficult and ended sadly, he enjoyed there one of his greatest outbursts of creativity — nearly one-third of his total output was written in the city. Among the many smaller compositions that Schumann completed during his first year at Düsseldorf was a set of four pieces for viola and piano to which he gave the evocative title *Märchenbilder* (*Pictures from Fairy Land*). He did not offer any further hints as to the expressive intentions of these modest “pictures,” but their somber harmonic coloring and sonority, the plangent lyricism and thoughtfulness of the leisurely outer movements, the rhythmic dislocations and unsettled meters of the fast internal ones, suggest not a child's world of fantasy, but an adult's recollection of childhood, with memories of earlier times, happy and sad, seen through the darkling prism of life's experience.

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## Quartet for Clarinet, Violin, Viola and Cello Krzysztof Penderecki (born in 1933)

*Composed in 1993.*

*Premiered on August 13, 1993 in Lubeck, Germany by clarinetist Sharon Kam, violinist Christoph Poppen, violist Kim Kashkashian and cellist Boris Pergamenschikow.*

Krzysztof Penderecki (pen-deRET-skee), born in 1933 in Debica, seventy miles east of Cracow, is the most significant Polish composer of his generation, and one of the most inspired and influential musicians to emerge from Eastern Europe after World War II. His music first drew attention at a 1959 competition sponsored by the Youth Circle of the Association of Polish Composers when three of his works entered anonymously—each won first prize in its class. He gained international fame only a year later with his *Threnody To the Victims of Hiroshima*, winner of UNESCO's "Tribune Internationale des Compositeurs." His stunning *St. Luke Passion* of 1966 enjoyed enormous success in Europe and America, and led to a steady stream of commissions and performances. During the

mid-1960s, Penderecki began incorporating more traditional techniques into his works without fully abandoning the powerfully dramatic avant-garde style that energized his early music. *Utrenia* (a choral setting of texts treating Christ's Entombment and Resurrection), the oratorio *Dies Irae* (dedicated to the memory of those murdered at Auschwitz), the opera *Paradise Lost*, the Violin Concerto and other important scores showed an increasing reliance on orthodox Romanticism in their lyricism and introspection filtered through his modern creative sensibility. Even though his compositions are filled with fascinating aural events, Penderecki insists that these soundscapes are not ends in themselves, but the necessary means to communicate his vision. "I am not interested in sound for its own sake and never have been," wrote Penderecki. "Anyone can make a sound: a composer, if he be a composer at all, must fashion it into an aesthetically satisfying experience."

Penderecki showed some interest in music during his early years by, taking lessons on piano and violin and writing a few pieces in traditional style, but he enrolled at the University of Cracow when he was seventeen with the intention of studying humanities. Cracow's musical life excited his creative inclinations, however, and he began studying composition privately with Franciszek Skoziński; a year later he transferred to the Cracow Academy of Music as a composition student of Artur Malewski and Stanislas Wiechowicz. Upon graduating from the Academy in 1958, Penderecki was appointed to the school's faculty and soon began establishing an international reputation for his compositions. In 1966, he went to Munster for the premiere of his *St. Luke Passion*, and his presence and music made such a strong impression in West Germany that he was asked to join the faculty of the Volkswing Hochschule für Musik in Essen. He returned to Cracow in 1972 to become director of the Academy of Music; while guiding the school during the next fifteen years, he also held an extended residency at Yale University (1973-1978). Penderecki has been active as a conductor since 1972, appearing with leading orchestras worldwide, recording many of his own works, and serving as Artistic Director of the Cracow Philharmonic (1987-1990), Music Director of the Casals Festival in Puerto Rico (1992-2002), and Artistic Advisor for the North German Radio Symphony Orchestra in Hamburg (1988-1992) and the Beijing Music Festival (1998); he has been Artistic Advisor and a frequent conductor of Warsaw's Sinfonia Varsovia since 1997. Among Penderecki's many distinctions are the prestigious Grawemeyer Award from the University of Louisville, Order of the White Eagle (Poland's highest honor), Three Star Order of Latvia, Prince

of Asturias Award, Sibelius Gold Medal, Fellowship in the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, honorary doctorates from several European and American universities, and honorary memberships in many learned academies.

The Quartet for Clarinet and Strings (1993) is a work of dark emotions and unconventional proportions: three short movements—a plaintive *Notturmo*, a nervous *Scherzo* and a sardonic *Serenade* in the style of a waltz—followed by a somber *Abschied* (“Farewell”) longer than the preceding movements combined. The *Notturmo* is largely a clarinet soliloquy, with the viola adding a complementary melodic strand in the movement’s second half and the cello and violin whispering sustained tones that observe rather than participate in the brooding dialogue. The *Scherzo* begins with a tightly wound unison string line whose patterning seems to defy the obligatory triple meter. The clarinet enters and fractures the thematic unanimity, and then takes the lead for the central trio, slightly slower in tempo and more jagged in contour. The *Scherzo* returns and leads without pause to the *Serenade*, which tries to be a somewhat ironic waltz but repeatedly becomes distracted and finally gives up. The *Abschied* is a deeply felt elegy, quiet throughout and increasingly attenuated in texture until sound and feeling seem little more than memories. A single note plucked on the cello that turns the Quartet’s final sonority from a minor chord to a major one offers a tiny glimmer of hope at the close.



## ***Miriam the Prophetess* for Clarinet and Accordion Merima Ključo (born in 1973)**

*Composed in 1924.*

“Some years ago I had the honor of composing and arranging the music for Theodore Bikel’s play *Sholom Aleichem, Laughter Through Tears*. One of the songs Theodore suggested to use in the play was *A Sudenyu*, a famous Yiddish song that describes the feast of the coming of the Messiah. Important prophets and characters from the Jewish history are mentioned in *A Sudenyu* — Moses teaching the Torah, David playing his harp, King Solomon telling words of wisdom — but for me, the most interesting moment, the one that triggered my curiosity, was the dance of the prophetess Miriam.

“At that time I didn’t know much about Miriam, but I was intrigued by the fact that there was an important female prophetess, something that is not common in male-dominated, Abrahamic religions. I was curious and wanted to know more about her. Of course, once one starts doing research, one finds many fascinating details, but I decided not to go

into those details and to keep it very simple, since my inspiration for my composition *Miriam the Prophetess* has more to do with the childlike fascination with tales and stories than with intellectual or religious interpretations.

“When I read Golijov’s introduction to his *Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind*, I recognized some parallels: the moment where the song was used in the play was when Bikel, acting the part of Sholom Aleichem’s grandfather, is telling stories and triggering young Sholom’s fantasy with the rich history of Jewish storytelling. That was for me one of the most mesmerizing moments of the whole play, the moment when Miriam the Prophetess spoke to my own fantasy.

“Specially written for a collaboration with Franklin Cohen, *Miriam the Prophetess* starts with a short fragment from *A Sudenyu*, with the clarinet and the accordion creating an echoing, time-free, resonating momentum of sounds. They breathe, they communicate, they create the sound by taking the same notes from each other in the same way storytelling goes — from person to person, breath to breath, country to country, century to century — and lead into Miriam’s uplifting dance.

“May Miriam always dance for us. May the beauty of storytelling continue to inspire us.”

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## Octet for Strings in E-flat major, Op. 20 Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

*Composed in 1825.*

*Premiered in October 1825 in Berlin.*

In addition to being born with the proverbial silver spoon, Felix Mendelssohn was virtually bestowed a golden baton as a natal gift. His parents' household was among the most cultured and affluent in all of Berlin, but his family saw to it that his privilege was well balanced by discipline and responsibility. Young Felix arose at 5:00 every morning (6:00 on Sunday), and spent several hours in private tutoring with the best available teachers. When his musical talents became obvious in his early years, he was first given instruction in piano, and soon thereafter in theory and composition by the distinguished pedagogue Carl Friedrich Zelter. Mendelssohn's earliest dated composition is a cantata completed on January 3, 1820, three weeks before his eleventh birthday, though that work was almost certainly preceded by others whose exact dates are not recorded. To display the boy's blossoming musical abilities, the Mendelssohn mansion was turned into a twice-monthly concert hall featuring the precocious youngster's achievements. A large summer

house was fitted as an auditorium seating several hundred people, and every other Sunday morning the city's finest musicians were brought in to perform both repertory works and the latest flowers of Mendelssohn's creativity. These matinees — complemented by an elegant luncheon — began in 1822, when Mendelssohn was thirteen. He selected the programs, led the rehearsals, appeared as piano soloist, played violin in the chamber pieces, and even conducted, though in those early years he was still too short to be seen by the players in the back rows unless he stood on a stool. With sister Fanny participating as pianist, sister Rebecca as singer and brother Paul as cellist, it is little wonder that invitations to these happy gatherings were among the most eagerly sought and highly prized of any in Berlin society. By 1825, Mendelssohn had written over eighty works for these concerts, including operas and operettas, string quartets and other chamber pieces, concertos, motets, and a series of thirteen symphonies for strings.

It was with the Octet for Strings, composed in 1825 at the tender age of sixteen, a full year before the Overture to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, that the stature of Mendelssohn's genius was first fully revealed. He wrote the work as a birthday offering for his violin and viola teacher, Eduard Rietz, and premiered it during one of the household musicales in October of that year; Rietz participated in the performance and young Felix is thought to have played one of the viola parts. (Rietz and his family remained close to Mendelssohn. Eduard's brother, Julius, succeeded Mendelssohn as director of the Leipzig Gewandhaus concerts upon the composer's death in 1847, and edited his complete works for publication in the 1870s.) The scoring of the Octet calls for a double string quartet, though, unlike the work written in 1823 for the same instrumentation by Louis Spohr (another friend of the Mendelssohns and a regular visitor to their family programs), which divides the eight players into two antiphonal groups, Mendelssohn treated his forces as a single integrated ensemble, a virtual miniature orchestra of strings. On the manuscript, he specifically pointed out that "this Octet must be played by all instruments in symphonic orchestral fashion. Pianos and fortes must be strictly observed and more strongly emphasized than is usual in pieces of this character." Even allowing that Mendelssohn, by age sixteen, was already a veteran musician with a decade of experience and a sizeable catalog of music to his credit, the brilliance and originality of the Octet's scoring, most notably the unprecedented compositional virtuosity of its elfin Scherzo, are phenomenal. "Eight string players might easily practice it for a lifetime without coming to the end of their delight in producing its

marvels of tone-color,” wrote the not-easily-impressed Sir Donald Tovey. The Octet was one of Mendelssohn’s most famous creations during his lifetime, enjoying innumerable performances throughout Europe and England. Mendelssohn himself retained a special fondness for the piece — he eagerly participated in several performances as violist in Leipzig and elsewhere; he arranged the music for piano duet; he made an orchestral transcription of the Scherzo for a London Philharmonic concert of 1829 (George Grove, founder of the music dictionary that still bears his name, reported that “it rarely escapes an encore”); and he declared in later years that it was “my favorite of all my compositions. I had the most wonderful time writing it.” Mendelssohn’s Octet, called by Max Bruch “a miracle,” is the greatest piece of music ever composed by one so young, including Mozart and Schubert.

The Octet is splendidly launched by a wide-ranging main theme that takes the first violin quickly through its entire compass; the lyrical second theme is given in sweet, close harmonies. The development section, largely concerned with the subsidiary subject, is relatively brief, and culminates in a swirling unison passage that serves as the bridge to the recapitulation of the earlier melodic materials.

The following Andante, like many slow movements in Mozart’s instrumental compositions, was created not so much as the fulfillment of some particular formal model, but as an ever-unfolding realization of its own unique melodic materials and world of sonorities. The movement is tinged with the delicious, bittersweet melancholy that represents the expressive extreme of the musical language of Mendelssohn.

The composer’s sister Fanny noted that the featherstitched Scherzo was inspired by gossamer verses from Goethe’s Faust, to which Mendelssohn’s fey music is the perfect complement:

*Floating cloud and trailing mist,  
O’er us brightening hover:  
The rushes shake, winds stir the brake:  
Soon all their pomp is over.*

The closing movement, a dazzling moto perpetuo with fugal episodes, recalls Mozart’s “Jupiter” Symphony (No. 41, C major, K. 551) in its rhythmic vitality and contrapuntal display, simultaneously whipping together as many as three themes from the finale and a motive from the Scherzo during one climatic episode in the closing pages.

Referring to this Octet and the Midsummer Night’s Dream Overture, Wilfrid Blunt noted, “Had Mozart and Mendelssohn both died at the age of seventeen, the former would have been remembered today only as a prodigy performer on the piano, the latter as the composer of two masterpieces.”

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