Franz Schubert  
*Symphony No. 8 in B "Unfinished", D. 759*  
(1797 – 1828)

I. Allegro moderato  
II. Andante con moto

The history behind this work remains unclear. Is it finished, or unfinished?

Schubert began the B minor Symphony in 1822 and completed the two movements rather quickly. Around this time Schubert received the news that he would receive an honorary diploma from the Styrian Music Society of Graz, Austria. As a gracious response, Schubert offered the Society director the two movements of this “unfinished” symphony. Oddly enough, the director set them aside and ignored for almost 40 years! In 1865 the symphony finally had its premier and the style of Schubert was easily recognized by audiences despite the composer having passed away three decades early.

The first movement opens with almost ‘timeless’ gesture from the low celli and basses. Their ‘tune’ remains static for a moment as if unwilling to jump into an emotional plot. Then, the pulsing, nervous energy of the strings begins, and soon the winds add their calm and oddly nonchalant melody. The pulsing underneath creates conflicting tension with the gentle melodies.

This builds, then relaxes into a brightening of color as the cello section once again appears now playing a tune that to this day remains the most famous Schubert melody!

The movement is frequently interrupted by what I simply call “monster chords.” These ominous, chords from the low brass create a sense of suspense and upset the flow of time. The movement works through this play between dramatic tension and gentle melody.

The intense, stormy and dramatic style of the first movement contrasts starkly with the lyrical, tender second movement. Although the second movement also makes use of pulsing background harmonies under flowing melodies, and full-orchestra interruptions, the effect is much more restrained. In all, the second movement provides a thoughtful response the previous drama, and makes for a satisfying close to the work.

Paul Dukas  
*Villanelle for Horn and Orchestra*  
(1865 – 1935)  
Charles Sernatinger, French Horn

Paul Dukas wrote this work in 1906 to be a challenging test piece for the Paris Conservatoire. The title refers to a form of Italian part-song popular in Naples in the 16th century. The result is a work which puts the horn player through many tests of technique and skills; stopped notes, fast scales patterns. The player will use “open” and closed” notes to create unusual shades of color and tone qualities. For the listener, this is a delight showcase of horn playing with in a playful setting.

*Villanelle* was originally scored for horn and piano; this orchestral setting is by Donald Miller.

Dukas is most well-known for his work *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*. The NSO will perform this work on their May 2017 concert.
**Edvard Grieg  *In Autumn***

Grieg composed this concert overture, *In Autumn*, op. 11, while in Rome in 1866 and is Grieg’s first attempt at writing for full orchestra.

The piece, based on Grieg’s song, “Autumn Storm,” suggests the mix of stormy weather with turbulent wind and slight chill – and the sunnier, pastoral moods of autumn. The work begins with declarative chords, intersperse with pastoral comments from the winds. The impressions of nature are then painted with full romantic color. The work concludes with joyful dance of autumn harvesters.

There is an interesting story told of this piece; Grieg took it to the leading Scandinavian composer of the time, Niels Gade. Although Gade called it “trash.” Grieg went ahead and arranged it for piano duet. He then submitted the work in this format to a competition at the Swedish Academy and it won the prize.

Despite being an early work, the music reveals the technical craft and orchestra color and melodies we expect and enjoy in Grieg’s music.

**Bedrich Smetana**

*The Moldau (Vlatava) from Má Vlast (My Country)*

The music we hear today is just one of six movements of a large suite called Má vlast (My Country) which expresses Smetana’s “pride and love of homeland” in Bohemia. *The Moldau* depicts the river and the landscapes through which it flows; creating a musical account of the river’s course from its start as two mountain springs, to the river’s stately arrival through the city of Prague.

Smetana mentions eight distinct sections in the score. It is for the listener to enjoy imagining the ‘travelogue’ of Bohemian scenery. First, two flutes depict the river’s beginning from one cold string and one hot spring. The two streams gather energy and build to the full orchestral “river” Next, the music evokes a forest scene with hunters, through the composer’s use of horn calls. This leads to a section of rhythmic dance music depicting a ‘peasant wedding’ scene. This in turn fades to a quieter night-time scene describing a moonlight dance of the river nymphs. The full Moldau River theme returns and pushes forward as the the river passes through the St. Johns Rapids. Once through the narrow rapids, the river expands and slows; the music taking on the same full, rich feeling. Finally, the river flows past the castle of Prague with majestic pride, then fades in the distance.

With or without the added narration of a river, the music is rich in evoking the beauty, energy and enduringness of nature.

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