Jacques Offenbach (1819-1880); Overture to *Orpheus in the Underworld*
Duration: 8 minutes

The son of a synagogue cantor, Jacques (originally named Jakob) Offenbach was born in Cologne, Germany. He began violin studies with his father at age six and took up the cello three years later. He and his older brother, Jules (originally Julius) entered the Paris Conservatoire at ages 14 and 18 respectively. Jules was a diligent student and succeeded in completing his studies and graduating from the Conservatoire. Jacques, on the other hand, quickly became bored with academia and left the Conservatoire after only a year. No matter: His gifts and talents allowed him to become one of the finest cellists in Europe, and his composition skills led directly to the development of the 19th century *operetta*.

*Orpheus in the Underworld* (or *Orphee aux enfers*) is a two-act comic opera, and by some is considered to be one of the first full-length operettas. The original French text was provided by Ludovic Halevy, and later revised by Hector-Jonathan Cremieux. The work was premiered in 1858. It was considered to be quite scandalous by some, poking fun at traditional classical drama performances, not backing away from the societal and political scandals of the day,...and let’s not even mention inclusion of the oh-so-indelicate “can-can!!” Actually, let’s DO mention it: This version of the Overture (as arranged by J.G. Busch) features a rousing introduction followed by several featured instrumental solos (clarinet, oboe, cello, and violin) before closing with the “Infernal Galop,” or “can-can” that brings the Overture to a close.

[This was the very first orchestral selection that I ever played, when I joined the Memphis Youth Symphony at the beginning of 8th grade. So much fear then (I had only been playing for eight months), so much fun now!! The principal cellist (who played the cello solo mentioned in the previous paragraph) for that performance was Joan Dutcher (Jeanrenaud), who went on from her roots in Memphis to become a founding member of the famed Kronos String Quartet.]

Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945); “Intermezzo sinfonico” from *Cavalleria rusticana*
Duration: 4 minutes

A baker’s son, Pietro Mascagni was a native of Livorno in Tuscany. He began studying composition with Alfredo Soffredini at the *Instituto Musicale di Livorno* (later renamed *Instituto Cherubini*) at age 13, and he composed a number of works, both instrumental
and vocal, during his teen years. He enjoyed particular success as an opera composer and conductor as an adult, and also wrote several works for orchestra, along with songs and piano music.

*Cavalleria rusticana* (*Rustic Chivalry*) was based on a short story (and play) by Giovanni Verga; the libretto was provided by Giovanni Targioni-Tozzetti and Guido Menasci. Written as a competition entry, it was judged the First Prize winner, and proved to be Mascagni’s first and greatest success. It is a relatively short opera in one act, lasting about 1 1/4 hours (and many times is paired with Ruggiero Leoncavallo’s *Pagliacci*, it being an opera of similar style and length). This is considered to be one of the first *verismo* operas in that it is intended to depict everyday life in a realistic way rather than by caricature or overblown romanticism. The “Intermezzo sinfonico” is played by the orchestra at about the midway point of the opera, and is a truly gorgeous piece of music. In addition to its justifiable fame as a brilliant instrumental interlude from the world of opera, it has also gained fame through its use in contemporary movie soundtracks, most notably *Raging Bull* and *The Godfather, Part III*.

Michael Gandolfi (b. 1956): *The Nature of Light* (for Clarinet and String Orchestra)
2012
Duration: 22 minutes

Award-winning composer Michael Gandolfi, a native of Massachusetts, was educated at the New England Conservatory of Music, receiving his BM and MM degrees in Composition. He presently chairs the NEC composition department. His compositions have been performed by many of the world’s leading ensembles; including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, amongst others. His works have become familiar to MSO audiences in recent years: Selections from *The Garden of Cosmic Speculation* were performed on the opening concert of our 2011-2012 season. *Fourth Chickasaw Variations*, commissioned for the MSO by Paul and Linnea Bert, was premiered by the orchestra in the spring of 2013.

Tonight’s work, *The Nature of Light*, was commissioned by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra; the ASO gave its premiere in January of 2013 with this evening’s soloist, Laura Ardan. The work is intended to reflect the dual nature of light (both particle and wave), and is presented in two movements with this duality in mind. The first movement, “Waves” (Anthem), is mostly lyrical and expressive. The second movement, “Particles” (Shape Shifter), is fast-paced, and highlights the clarinet’s virtuosity.

Please Note: The basic description of this work is paraphrased from the composer’s published Program Notes; his full description of the composition may be found at www.michaelgandolfi.com/scores_and_notes/nature_of_light.pdf
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791): Selections from Die Zauberflote (The Magic Flute), K, 620
Duration: 25 minutes

Arguably the greatest child prodigy in the history of music, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart spent much of his time between the ages of six and fifteen on tour throughout Europe and England. Amongst the royalty that he performed for were King George III (England), King Louis XV (France), and Empress Maria Theresa (Austria). By the time he was eight years of age, he had composed his first of over forty symphonies, and by age twelve he had composed his first opera.

The Magic Flute, one of Mozart’s most popular operas, was premiered in Vienna, approximately two months before the composer’s death. It contains elements of singspiel, or folk-theatre, being in German and containing spoken dialogue (occasionally in the United States, the opera is performed in English in order to take advantage of the more obviously comic elements contained therein). The libretto was provided by Emmanuel Schickaneder (who was also the original Papageno in the production). Many items occur in groups of three (a nod to Mozart’s involvement with freemasonry): the Queen’s ladies, Sarastro’s priests, spirits, gates, trials, chords, number of flats in the key signature, et cetera,...

Tonight we’ll hear the following selections:

Overture. This is the orchestral introduction to the opera. It begins with a short dignified introduction headed by the symbolic three chords (played by the full orchestra), and continues as a sprightly sonata form movement. The symbolic three chords are heard a second time between the exposition and the development (played by the woodwinds and the brass).

“Der Vogelfanger bin ich ja” (The bird-catcher, that’s me!). Our introduction to the Queen’s bird-catcher, Papageno, whose ultimate goal in life is to catch a pretty girl to have as his wife.

“Ach, ich fuhl’s” (Ah, I feel it, it has vanished!). Pamina’s aria from Act Two. She is in despair as a result of Tamino’s Vow of Silence (about which she does not know), and she believes that he has lost his love for her.

“Der Holle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen” (Hell’s vengeance boils in my heart). Better known as the Queen of the Night Aria (actually the second of two arias for this character; the first occurs in Act One). This very demanding aria was sung by Mozart’s sister-in-law, Josepha Hofer, at the premiere performance. The Queen gives Pamina (her daughter) a knife, insisting that Pamina kill Sarastro (the Queen’s rival), or be forever disowned and cursed. This aria is famous for its incredible range: climaxing on
a high F nearly two-and-a-half octaves above Middle C, it calls for one of the highest notes possible for a coloratura soprano to execute. But not THE highest: There are at least two more arias in existence that call for a high G—and one of those was also written by Mozart!!

“Bei Mannern, welche Liebe fuhlen” (In men who feel love, a good heart is not lacking). A duet near the end of Act One that is sung by Papageno and Pamina extolling the joys and virtues of marriage.

Act Two: Finale Chorus. As Good triumphs over Evil in the restoration of Light to the land, all sing: “Es seigte die Sterke, und kronet zum Lohn Die Schönheit und Weisheit mit ewiger Kron” (Love has triumphed, rewarding beauty and wisdom with an everlasting crown)!

[The Magic Flute is one of the first operas I ever performed, and it was my first Mozart opera. I’ve played it several times since that first semester of graduate school, and it remains the Mozart opera that I know and love best.]

*by Michelle Pellay-Walker*