



Fiachra Garvey

Piano

Friday, September 26, 2025

7:30 PM

Christ United Methodist Church

Sonata No. 30 in E major, Op. 109

Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770-1827)

One of the most famous composers in history, Beethoven led a life as dramatic as his music. Beethoven was performing for royalty by the age of seven, earning his reputation as a child prodigy. He began losing his hearing in his late twenties and was completely deaf by his mid-forties—yet he composed some of his greatest works without being able to hear them. Over his lifetime, Beethoven composed over 700 pieces and helped bridge the Classical and Romantic musical eras. His last reported words were, “Pity, pity, too late,” after receiving a gift of wine on his deathbed.



Beethoven's Sonata No. 30 in E major was composed in 1820, only seven years before his death. This incredible work features three movements, each distinct but with common themes running through them all. The first movement is short and whimsical. The second is a scherzo-like, or joke-like, Allegro. The finale of this sonata showcases a beautiful theme followed by six expressive variations, ending with a spiritual and meditative finale. This sonata exemplifies Beethoven's late style: intimate, innovative, and emotionally charged.

Saoirdhréacht Gaedhealach (Gaelic Fantasy)

Rhoda Coghill
(1903-2000)

Rhoda Coghill was an Irish pianist, composer, and poet. She began her musical journey on the piano in Dublin before moving to Berlin to continue her studies. She won a grand total of 21 awards at the Feis Ceoil, Ireland's largest classical music competition, between 1913 and 1925. Later in life, she turned to poetry, writing two collections of poems rooted in nature and spirituality.



Rhoda Coghill's *Saoirdhréacht Gaedhealach* (Gaelic Fantasy), composed in 1935, is a solo piano work that combines her rich Irish musical identity with her modernist expression. At around five minutes, the piece blends traditional Gaelic themes and tunes with beautifully elaborate harmonies. This piece was clearly part of Coghill's effort to elevate Irish art music during a time of cultural transformation.

Rhapsody in Blue

George Gershwin
(1898-1937)



George Gershwin was a groundbreaking American composer and pianist who blurred the lines between classical music and jazz, creating a uniquely American sound. Born in Brooklyn to Russian-Jewish immigrants, he began his career as a “song plugger” in Tin Pan Alley before rising to fame with hits like “Swanee” and “I Got Rhythm.”

Gershwin collaborated frequently with his brother Ira, a gifted lyricist, and together they shaped the sound of Broadway in the 1920s and '30s. Tragically, Gershwin died at just 38 from a brain tumor, but his music remains a vibrant part of American cultural heritage.

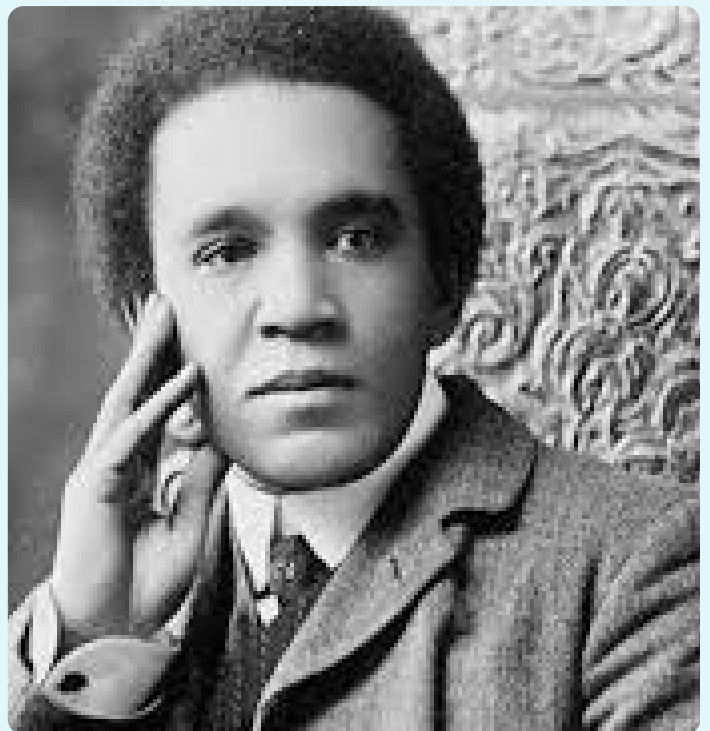
Rhapsody in Blue showcases George Gershwin's signature blend of classical music and jazz, capturing the spirit of the Roaring Twenties in the United States. Incredibly, this piece was composed in just a few weeks! Premiered by Paul Whiteman's band, it launched Gershwin's reputation as a serious composer and remains a defining piece of American music.

The Phantom Tells His Tale Of Longing, Op. 66 No. 3

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
(1875-1912)

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was born in London to an English mother and a Creole father from Sierra Leone. He was a composer and conductor whose music blended European classical traditions with African themes, earning him the nickname “the African Mahler” in early 20th-century America. Coleridge-Taylor studied at the Royal College of Music and quickly gained recognition for his compositional talent. His music often incorporates lush orchestration, lyrical melodies, and rhythmic vitality, often infused with themes drawn from African and African American culture. Coleridge-Taylor toured the United States multiple times, collaborating with Black musicians and inspiring future generations of composers.

Composed in 1907 as part of the five-piece suite *Forest Scenes*, Coleridge-Taylor’s “The Phantom Tells His Tale of Longing”. The suite, or collection of short related pieces, evokes a mythical woodland world. This third movement portrays a moment of quiet confession from a spectral figure wandering through the forest

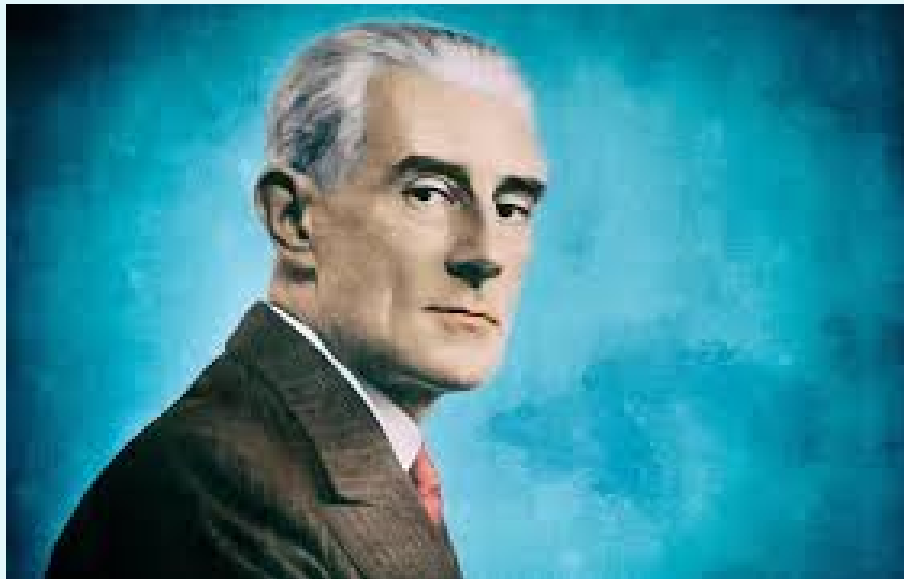


Pavane pour une infante défunte

Maurice Ravel

(1875-1937)

If there was ever a painter of music, Maurice Ravel was it - a true master of using harmony to provide beautiful color. Born in France, he developed a distinctive style that blended French refinement with Spanish flair and jazzy rhythms. Though often grouped with the Impressionists, Ravel preferred to be seen as a classicist—his music is meticulously crafted, emotionally restrained, and rich in detail.



Ravel's "Pavane pour une infante défunte" ("Pavane for a Dead Princess") was originally written for solo piano and later orchestrated in 1910, showcasing Ravel's unmatched gift for color and texture. Despite its somber title, the work is a poetic imagining of a young Spanish princess dancing a pavane—a slow, stately Renaissance court dance. He once said that the piece should be played "not as if the princess were dead, but as if she were dreaming."

Sonata No, 1 in D minor, Op. 28

Sergei Rachmaninov
(1873-1943)

Sergei Rachmaninov was renowned as a composer, virtuoso pianist, and conductor. Born into a noble Russian family, he showed prodigious talent early on and trained at the Moscow Conservatory. Despite early setbacks—his Symphony No. 1 was a disaster at its premiere—he rebounded with some of the most beloved compositions of the 20th century. After the Russian Revolution, Rachmaninov emigrated to the U.S., where he focused more on performing than composing, dazzling audiences with his massive hands and unmatched technique.

Composed in 1907, the Piano Sonata No. 1 showcases Rachmaninov's signature blend of lyric melody with virtuosity. Originally inspired by Goethe's "Faust", the sonata's three movements loosely reflect the journey of its characters. Though Rachmaninov later abandoned the explicit program, the narrative intensity remains.



The first movement opens with brooding introduction, followed by a flurry of fast passages that showcase the pianist's virtuosic prowess. The second offers a moment of lyrical repose, while the finale erupts with fiery energy and technical brilliance.

Matt Wilson, Program Notes

Matt Wilson, the author of the program notes that you hopefully found illuminating and inspiring, is a violinist and violist from South Carolina. He received a Bachelor's in Music Education from Appalachian State University in Boone, NC, before teaching in the North Carolina public schools for several years. He received a Master's in Music Education from UNC Greensboro and a Ph.D. in Music Education from the University of Kansas in Lawrence, KS. He is an active researcher, often focusing on issues of gender and sexuality in music education. Dr. Wilson is currently on the faculty at Penn-Griffin School for the Arts, where he teaches history, philosophy, music theory, and music appreciation.



Dr. Wilson has been an active member of the North Carolina and Kansas Music Educators Associations. He is a member of the National Association for Music Education and the American String Teachers Association (ASTA). He is currently on the ASTA's RIA committee, continuing to share in creating inclusion and diversity within music education.