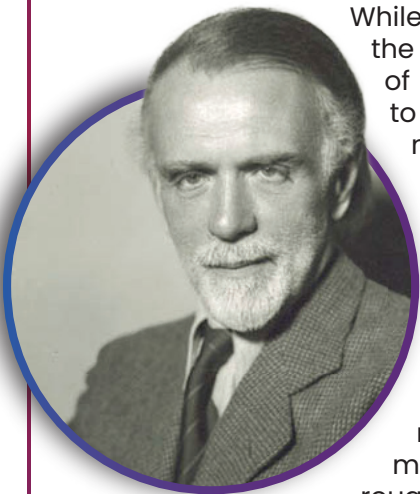




Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967)
Dances of Galanta (1933)

From a young age, Zoltán Kodály displayed a keen interest in music, which was encouraged by his father, himself a talented amateur musician. By the time he reached secondary school, Kodály had mastered the violin, was singing in the cathedral choir, and had begun composing. Later he would continue his studies at Hungary's most prestigious musical institution, the Franz Liszt Academy. Surprisingly, however, he chose to pursue modern languages as his primary scholastic discipline and would ultimately receive a Ph.D. in philosophy and linguistics.



While he is certainly best known as one of the more important Hungarian composers of the 20th century, his contributions to the fields of ethnomusicology and music education are also considerable. Beginning in 1905, and continuing for the rest of his life, Kodály, along with his friend Béla Bartók, traveled through the Hungarian backcountry collecting folksongs. This activity was not immediately accepted by the Hungarian musical establishment, most of whom regarded German art music as the most cultured form of musical expression, and folk music as rough or uncouth. (In fact, most upper-class

Hungarians spoke German as their primary language and regarded their native tongue as suitable only for the peasant population.) Undeterred, the two men published several important collections of authentic Hungarian melodies, and eventually two important books on the subject.

Inevitably, both composers began to consciously incorporate the influence of Hungarian folk music in their own compositions, with strikingly different results. Bartók was the more radical of the two, more influenced by the rhythmic characteristics of folk songs, while



Kodály was generally more conservative, concerned with melody and lyricism.

The *Dances of Galanta* were composed in 1933 on a commission from the Philharmonic Society of Budapest. Kodály responded with a sort of musical memoir. Galanta (now in Slovakia) was a small town where Kodály spent several years of his childhood. In his prefatory notes to the score, the composer recalled a gypsy band which was the first “orchestral sonority” to have an effect on him. Later he would discover some collections of Hungarian dances, published around 1800, which contained music “after several gypsies from Galanta.” The composer adapted several of these themes in an effort to preserve and continue these ancient traditions.

Dances of Galanta is a single continuous movement. A short introduction ends with a virtuosic clarinet cadenza, which links into the first dance in a moderate tempo. The four dances that follow gradually increase in tempo and brilliance. Near the end, the first dance theme returns briefly, followed by another clarinet cadenza and a rousing coda.

Wojciech Kilar (1932–2013)
Orawa for string orchestra (1986)

The Tatra Mountains form part of the border between southern Poland and Slovakia. They are the highest and most spectacular mountains in the Carpathian range, and home to a vigorous folk tradition. The songs and dance music of the Tatras have been inspirational to generations of Polish composers, from Chopin in the 19th century, through Szymanowski in the early 20th, and now Kilar in the late 20th.

Wojciech Kilar was born in 1932 in Lviv, which at the time was still in Polish hands (it was annexed by Soviet Ukraine in 1939 and remains Ukrainian today). In the late 1950s, he emerged as a leader of the so-called New Polish School, a group of young avant-garde composers including Górecki and Penderecki. Like his cohorts, his music of the time favored sonority and tone color over traditional ideas of melody and harmony. Still, he set himself apart by the use of simpler forms and textures, as well as rhythm inspired by folk



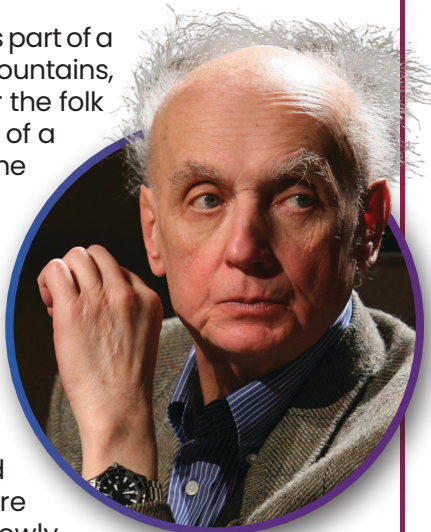
music of the Tatra highlands. By the 1970s, his style had evolved toward a more traditional outlook, though experimental elements never disappeared entirely.

American audiences may know of Kilar as a composer of film scores, including *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, *The Truman Show*, and *The Pianist*. He had been most active in his native Poland, credited with over 100 scores for Polish film and television, while also keeping a strong presence in the world of concert music. His concert works include five symphonies, two piano concertos, several symphonic poems, and a large number of choral works.

Orawa, for string orchestra, was written as part of a sequence of pieces evoking the Tatra Mountains, inspired either by the landscape itself, or the folk music of the region. The title is the name of a river that flows through the Tatras, and the region surrounding it.

Without actually quoting any folk material, *Orawa* captures some of the rhythmic energy typical of the region. However, it is structured in a way that recalls minimalism, a trend in both American and Eastern European concert music. Short rhythmic cells are repeated and slowly evolve, juxtaposed with contrasting rhythmic cells that are also repeated and varied. Textures slowly grow in complexity, then abruptly change. The music is almost entirely tonal, but now and then we hear echoes of Kilar's early experiments with dissonance and tone clusters.

Orawa seems to have held a special place in Kilar's heart. In a late interview, he said of it that it was "the only piece in which I would not change a single note, though I have looked at it many times. What I have achieved in it is what I always strive for — to be the best possible Kilar."





Florence Price (1887–1953)
Piano Concerto in one movement (1932–34)

During the 19th century, the United States had grown from a relative cultural backwater to one of the most advanced countries on Earth. Cities boasted orchestras, opera companies, and virtuosos to rival the best in Europe. Several American composers had achieved worldwide renown, but one troubling question began to be asked. Since most American composers received their training in Europe, especially Germany, much of their music tended to follow a Germanic style. By the end of the century, many began to pose the question: What is American music? And what should it be?

In 1892, when Dvořák arrived from Bohemia for a three-year stay in New York, he found himself considering the question. He had been instrumental in forging a recognizably “Bohemian” style by finding its roots in the folk music of his native land. Why couldn’t that happen here? he wondered. Upon being introduced to African-American spirituals by his student, Harry Burleigh, and finding them deeply beautiful and moving, he thought he had found his source. “I am now satisfied,” he wrote, “that the future music of this country must be founded upon what are called the Negro melodies [i.e. spirituals]...These are the product of the soil. They are American.”

Dvořák’s advice had little effect. Amy Beach argued that as a White American, it made more sense to seek inspiration in the music of her Scots and Irish forbears and wrote her *Gaelic Symphony* to drive home her point. But for the most part, American composers simply ignored Dvořák.

Most, but not all. There was a small but growing number of African-American classical musicians. Entrenched racism was a barrier for most of them, but some had broken through. Florence Price, being both African-American and a woman, had to





face two barriers, but broke through them both, at least for a time.

Price, née Florence Beatrice Smith, was born in 1887 in Little Rock, Arkansas. She became something of a prodigy, playing piano in public at four years old, and publishing her first composition at age 11. Graduating as Valedictorian of her High School at 14, she was accepted to the New England Conservatory, studying piano and organ as well as composition with George Chadwick, one of the leading American composers of the day. After graduation, she held various teaching positions and briefly was chair of the music department at what is now Clark Atlanta University. In 1912 she married Thomas Price, a lawyer, and returned to Little Rock.

After a series of racial incidents including a lynching, the Price family (which now included two young daughters) left Little Rock for Chicago in 1927. Here her musical career began to take off. A breakthrough came in 1932 when she won first prize (for her First Symphony) and third prize (for her Piano Sonata) in the Wanamaker Foundation Awards (her onetime student Margaret Bonds also won first prize in the song category). The following year, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra gave the Symphony its premiere; it would be the first time a female African-American composer had ever had a work performed by a major orchestra.

The conductor for that occasion was Frederick Stock, who encouraged her to try a piano concerto next. She began one almost immediately, completing it the following year. Her Piano Concerto in One Movement was premiered in Chicago in June of 1934, with Stock again conducting and Price at the piano. More performances throughout the country followed, with the piano being played either by Price herself, or her former student Margaret Bonds. Unfortunately, the full score and most of the orchestra parts were lost in 1940. Further performances came to a halt, and the concerto faded to obscurity.

Although her music received generally positive reviews wherever it was performed, the social mores of the time stood in the way of her career advancing much further. All told, she wrote over three hundred works in a variety of genres, including four symphonies. After her death in 1953, her work almost disappeared from concert



programs for over 50 years.

In 2009, a couple purchased a “fixer-upper” house in St. Anne, Illinois, not knowing that it had once been Florence Price’s summer home. The discovery of several boxes of Price’s manuscripts in the attic fueled a resurgence of interest in her work.

The score and parts to the concerto were still missing, but the discovered cache of manuscripts included a piano reduction of the score with indications of instrumentation. From that, it was possible to reconstruct the score, which was done by Trevor Weston in 2016. Two years later, Price’s manuscript full score unexpectedly turned up at an auction in St. Anne. Upon its publication in 2020, the concerto has finally returned to the active repertoire.



Like Liszt and Mendelssohn before her, Price structured her concerto as one continuous movement, but the presence of clear structural divisions gives the impression of a full three-movement concerto intended to be played without pause. The concerto begins tentatively, with wind instruments giving a suggestion of a theme, which the piano elaborates into a freewheeling cadenza. Once the full orchestra enters, the theme is heard in its entirety. At first the style echoes 19th century Romantic writing, with the influence of Dvořák clearly audible. However, once the second quasi-movement begins, a more personal voice emerges. A solo oboe presents a beautiful melody in pentatonic mode, resembling a spiritual more than anything else (as Dvořák advised). Meanwhile, the piano accompanies the melody with a bed of impressionistic, occasionally jazz-influenced figurations.

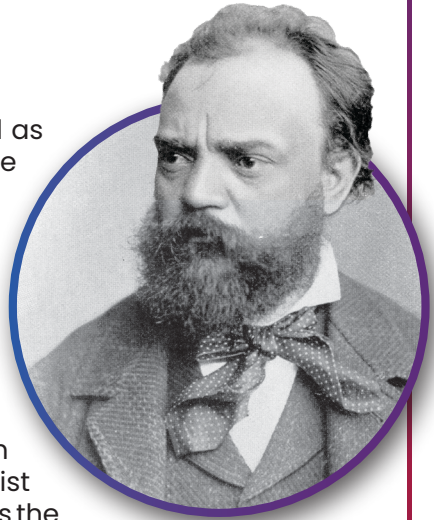
The concerto concludes with a “juba” dance, which appears in one form or another in all of Price’s large-scale works; in her words, it seemed impossible not to include it. The Juba was a dance style created by African-Americans in the pre-Civil war era, in which the



dancers accompany their steps with body percussion (claps, slaps, and so forth) in a very vigorous, syncopated style. Its influence on Ragtime should be obvious.

Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904)
Symphony No. 8 in G, op. 88 (1889)

Though Dvořák had been apprenticed as a young man to his father, a butcher, he had already displayed great talent for music, and moved to Prague to begin a career as a violinist and violist. An appointment as a viola player in the Czech National Opera Company proved a decisive influence for several reasons. First, it gave him practical experience in the art of orchestration. Secondly, it brought him into contact with the Czech nationalist composer Smetana, who was serving as the Opera's director. Performing under Smetana helped to awaken the spirit of nationalism in his own composition. Throughout his career as a composer, Bohemian or Slavic subjects served as material for his operas and tone poems, while traditional dance rhythms and folk melodies inspired his chamber music and symphonies.



Dvořák began his Eighth Symphony at home in the Bohemian countryside that he loved. It was a time of unusual musical fertility for him; he complained that his head was so full of ideas that his pen could not keep up. This was a good thing, since, at the time, Dvořák was inundated with commissions for various works. The circumstances probably account for a new feeling of spontaneity and formal freedom in his work. Dvořák said of this symphony: "[it] will be different from other symphonies, with individual thoughts worked out in a new way." In fact, since the themes in the first movement don't develop according to symphonic norms, some early commentators claimed that the symphony wasn't actually a symphony at all, but more of a symphonic poem, or perhaps



a Slavonic Rhapsody. Dvořák's Czech biographer agreed that the symphony wasn't important for its form, but for its spirit: "this symphony is not profound...it is a simple lyric singing of the beauty of our country."

Dvořák began jotting down ideas for the symphony on August 26, 1889. He began the draft score on September 6, completing it in only 17 days. By early November, the full score was complete, and the new symphony was premiered in Prague on February 2, 1890.

Problems arose when Simrock, Dvořák's publisher, complained that he wanted shorter pieces which would sell better, and offered him only a sixth of what he had paid for Dvořák's previous symphony. Enraged, Dvořák retrieved his score and struck a deal with the English publisher Novello, which led to the work being known for a brief time as the *English Symphony*, a nickname that was soon abandoned.

Though nominally in G major, the symphony actually begins in G minor, with a gorgeous, arching theme in the cellos. As the theme ends, the key finally switches to G major with a brief motive in the flute, which is often compared to a bird song. As the movement progresses, a profusion of beautiful melodies are heard, some with catchy dance-like rhythms recalling Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances*.

The second movement also features several shifts between major and minor and is for the most part based on several imaginative variants of its short opening phrase.

In place of the usual Scherzo, Dvořák often cast his third movements in Slavonic dance-forms. Here the movement is a *sousedská*, a moderate-tempo dance in triple meter. The middle section is based on a tune from his 1874 comic opera *The Stubborn Lovers*.

Festive trumpets introduce the final movement, the body of which is an extended variation form. The theme seems to have given Dvořák more difficulty than any other part of the symphony, since at least ten early drafts exist. The attentive listener may notice a relationship between this theme and the "bird call" motive from the first movement.

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