



Letters from Home

**Co-presented by The Temple Emanu-El Streicker Center
and Orchestra of St. Luke's**

Monday, April 12, 2021 at 6:30 PM EDT

Streaming Live from The Temple Emanu-El Streicker Center

Performers

Eriko Sato, Robin Zeh
violin

Louise Schulman, Liuh-Wen Ting
viola

Hamilton Berry, Rosalyn Clarke
cello

Program

LUIGI BOCCHERINI

Musica notturna delle strade di Madrid,
Op. 30, No. 6

Le campane de l'Ave Maria

Il tamburo

Minuetto dei Ciechi

Rosario

Passa Calle

Ritirata con Variazioni

IMAN HABIBI

Uproot (co-commissioned by OSL)

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

String Quintet in E-flat Major, Op. 97

Allegro non tanto

Allegro vivo

Larghetto

Finale: Allegro giusto

Program Notes

Musica notturna delle strade di Madrid, Op. 30, No. 6

Luigi Boccherini (1743–1805) wrote his string quintet *Musica notturna delle strade di Madrid* (*Night Music in the Streets of Madrid*) in 1780 as a way to ease both the homesickness of his patron the Infante Luis Antonio Jaime of Spain as well as conjure his own happy memories of Madrid after Luis Antonio was exiled by his brother from the king's court in Madrid to Arenas de San Pedro. As Luis Antonio's court musician, Boccherini followed him into exile along with other members of the Infante's court. The Infante's palace in Arenas de San Pedro was 90 miles away from Madrid in the mountainous and rural Avilá region and would have been a drastic change in both scenery and energy from the bustling, cosmopolitan life of the Spanish capital. *Musica notturna delle strade di Madrid* was Boccherini's way of bringing to life the familiar sounds of Madrid to the exiled court.

Born in the Tuscan city of Lucca in Northern Italy, Boccherini studied in Lucca, San Martino, and Rome, before moving to Vienna with his father, Leopoldino Boccherini, to work as a court musician in the Burgtheater. In 1770, after living in Madrid for almost a decade, Boccherini entered into the service of the Infante Luis Antonio Jaime at the royal court of King Charles III of Spain. Famously, Boccherini refused to remove a passage in one of his works that the king disliked; in fact, Boccherini doubled the passage, provoking the anger of the king, who then dismissed him from court. But Boccherini remained in the Infante's service and when his employer himself was banished, Boccherini made another home in Arenas de San Pedro. There, surrounded by the Sierra de Gredos mountain range, Boccherini experienced a period of immense creativity, composing over 100 pieces

of music, including this nostalgic homage to the nightlife of Madrid.

Music notturna delle strade di Madrid is a 13-minute work consisting of six movements, each of which is meant to portray the sounds one might have heard while walking through the streets of Madrid at nighttime during the 1770s: the church bells calling the faithful to the Ave Maria prayer, beggars strumming their guitars for money, the soldiers' drums, people singing on the street, and the retreat of the Madrid night watch signaling the closing of the streets and the end of the Madrid night. In the work's manuscript, Boccherini described the work and the inspiration for the movements. in his own words:

"This quintet describes the music that one hears, at night, in the streets of Madrid, beginning with the bell of the Ave Maria and ending with a military retreat. All that is not prescribed by the rigor of counterpoint must aim at the rendering of the truth that one has tried to represent.

La campana de l'Ave Maria –
Ave Maria of the quarters in the town.

Minuetto dei Ciechi. The violoncellists will hold their instrument across their knees and, using the nails of their hand, will imitate the sound of a guitar. After a brief pause, the Minuet is repeated, and then it leads on into the Rosary, but without a strict time beaten.

Passa Calle. The passacaglia of the street singers.

Ritirata. The retreat of Madrid with variations. One will imagine that the retreat begins to be heard in the distance, so that it must be played piano, so softly that it is scarcely audible; the indications crescendo and marcando must be strictly observed."

The piece was one Boccherini's best-known works in Spain during his lifetime, despite it not being

published until long after his death. He even wrote his own arrangements of the work, including a guitar quintet, and an alternate arrangement of the final movement for piano quintet.

Uproot (co-commissioned by OSL)

Iman Habibi's string quartet *Uproot* was co-commissioned by OSL and the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music and had its world premiere in 2019 as part of OSL's *Music in Color* series. The work is a meditation on Habibi's journey from his home in Iran to seek a new life in Canada.

From the composer:

"A relentless sense of unease prevails in this piece; it is the reminiscence of the anxieties felt in uncertain times, where one's survival depends entirely on what the next day may bring. There is a sense of helplessness, entrapment, being stuck and unable to fully express oneself. I find myself taking refuge in the past, as it passes by me like a distant dream, but that too, is transient."

–Iman Habibi

String Quintet in E-flat Major, Op. 97

On September 27, 1892, Antonin Dvořák, accompanied by his wife, Anna Čermáková, and six of their children, landed in New York Harbor. Dvořák had been invited to New York by Jeannette M. Thurber, a member of New York's elite society and a passionate patron of the arts, to head the National Conservatory of America, which Thurber had founded in 1885. Dvořák ran the conservatory, located in Manhattan on West 25th Street, from 1892 to 1895. During his brief tenure, the Czech composer encouraged his American students to look for inspiration in American folk music, similar to how he incorporated the folklore and traditional music of the regions of Moravia and his native Bohemia into his symphonies, chamber

works, and operas. Among the students he mentored during his time at the conservatory was Pennsylvania-born composer and baritone Harry Thacker Burleigh (1866–1949), who is celebrated today as instrumental in the development of a uniquely American classical music and as the first Black composer to incorporate elements of Black American musical culture—such as spirituals—into traditional classical music forms. Burleigh is also credited with introducing Dvořák to traditional Black American music, inspiring Dvořák to say that it should form the basis for a distinctly American musical tradition. Dvořák himself illustrated this in his famous Symphony No. 9, “From the New World,” with the iconic melody of the first movement recalling the spiritual “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.”

But Dvořák wasn’t always so enthusiastic about training American musicians, nurturing an American classical music tradition, or learning about American folk music. Thurber lured Dvořák to New York after several unsuccessful attempts with a lucrative annual salary of \$15,000 (roughly \$430,000 in today’s dollars) as well as summers off. Once in America, however, Dvořák became interested in identifying and engaging with American music, which, due to the influence of Burleigh, he saw as largely rooted in Black and Native American music. During the summer of 1893, Dvořák began to see more of the United States beyond the New York region. After completing his Symphony No. 9, he, his wife, and six of their children took a train to Spillville, Iowa, a small Midwestern town with a considerable Czech-speaking population, where they would spend the summer. The town was brought to Dvořák’s attention by one of his students, Jan Josef Kovařík, who suggested it as a way to alleviate some of Dvořák’s longing for home. With its bucolic setting and large immigrant community from Bohemia, Spillville reminded Dvořák of the town of Vysoka in Bohemia, where he had a summer residence. While in Spillville, Dvořák was able to replicate his summer routines in Vysoka, playing the organ in

the local Czech Catholic church, taking leisurely walks by the river, and speaking with the locals in his native language.

While in Spillville, Dvořák composed his String Quintet No. 3 with two violas, which appropriately combines Bohemian folk elements with quintessential American musical idioms, including what some scholars have claimed to be allusions to Native American music Dvořák may have encountered through the local Kickapoo tribe. In addition to the string quintet on today’s program, Dvořák also wrote his String Quartet No. 12, “American,” in Spillville. After this summer, Dvořák never returned to Spillville, though the memories of his months there and the welcome respite the small town gave to him from the chaos of New York City stayed with him for the rest of life. Shortly before his death, he remembered Spillville as “an ideal spot,” where he felt happy.

This program is also supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and The New York State Legislature.



About Orchestra of St. Luke's

Called “[New York’s] hometown band” by *The New York Times*, OSL performs at venues throughout the city including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, New York City Center, Merkin Hall, The Morgan Library and Museum, Brooklyn Museum, and many more. OSL is dedicated to cultivating a lifetime of engagement with classical music and offers free instrumental training and mentorship for students from elementary school through conservatory and beyond; produces guided community and educational performances for thousands of students and families; and owns and operates The DiMenna Center for Classical Music, New York City’s only rehearsal, recording, education, and performance facility expressly dedicated to classical music, serving more than 500 ensembles and more than 30,000 musicians each year. OSL has participated in 118 recordings, four of which have won Grammy Awards; has commissioned more than 50 new works; and has given more than 179 world, US, and New York City premieres. Recent guests and collaborators include cellist Alisa Weilerstein, tenor Jonas Kauffman, composer Eleanor Alberga, violinist Christian Tetzlaff, and pianist Jeremy Denk. As *New York* magazine notes, the Orchestra has a “...reputation for being able to play virtually any score as if the musicians had all grown up with it under their pillows.” Learn more at OSLmusic.org or @OSLmusic on Instagram, Facebook, Spotify, and more.

About Temple Emanu-El

Founded in 1845, Temple Emanu-El is the third-oldest Reform Jewish congregation in the United States. Its odyssey mirrors that of the Jewish community in New York. Temple Emanu-El is also one of the great Jewish houses of worship in the world. Within our walls, an enormous range of social, educational, and cultural programs are offered. Awe and soaring spirituality are feelings that are invoked when one first steps into the majestic 2,500-seat Main Sanctuary. In the vastness of the space and the quiet dignity of the mood we feel the presence of God. The play of light refracted through the clerestory windows against the arched side walls is a luminous reminder that this sanctuary is expressive of God’s spirit.

About The Streicker Center

From history to culture, food to politics, music to Israel. Night after night, the Streicker Center offers opportunities for discussion and debate about the most challenging and important issues of the day, from anti-Semitism, fake news, immigration, and racism to the future of the Jewish people.