

D'Aranyi received the completed score two days before the premiere. The full force of her personality seems to have made up for any technical shortcomings. "I don't know what she did," Ravel wrote afterwards, "but I liked it."

**First performance,** version for orchestra: October 19, 1924, in Amsterdam, by the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Pierre Monteux conducting, with Samuel Dushkin as soloist

**First SLSO performance:** December 27, 1947, Erich Leinsdorf conducting, with Isaac Stern as soloist

**Most recent SLSO performance:** March 25, 2017, at the SLSO Gala, David Robertson conducting with Celeste Golden Boyer as soloist

**Scoring:** Solo violin, 2 flutes (second doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, trumpet, percussion (glockenspiel, suspended cymbal, triangle), harp, celesta, strings

**Approximate performance time:** 10 minutes



### ALBERTO GINASTERA

**Born** April 11, 1916, Buenos Aires, Argentina

**Died** June 25, 1983, Geneva, Switzerland

#### *Variaciones concertantes*, op. 23

Argentina is at the core of Alberto Ginastera's music. Singing songs from the pampas, Argentina's epic grasslands. Moving with the aggressive dance of the Malambo. Celebrating the gauchesco—an analogue to the American cowboy—as national emblem.

Ginastera has said that *Variaciones concertantes* expresses "subjective nationalism." In other words, Argentina's sounds, people, and places lie so deep inside him that there is no need to explicitly quote melodies or rhythms.

*Variaciones*: variations on a theme. The cello sings a folksong-inspired theme over the guitar-like strum of the harp. When the theme returns, near the end of the work, it is played on double bass. The same melody, transformed by its journey.

Concertante: a concerto for multiple instruments. Soloists and duos from throughout the orchestra receive Ginastera's spotlight, in moments by turns playful, virtuosic, dramatic. Two quiet interludes give space for reflection: one for strings, one for winds.

Ginastera had written proudly nationalistic music since his teenage years. But he had grown frustrated with Argentina's politics, lurching from corruption to repression. Soon after *Variaciones concertantes*, Ginastera's optimism ran out.

"The time for folklore has passed," he later wrote, his music turning darker, more abstract. He would eventually leave Argentina, living out his final unhappy years in Switzerland.

**First performance:** June 2, 1953, in Buenos Aires, by the Asociación de la Música Orchestra, Igor Markevitch conducting

**First SLSO performance:** October 19, 1956, Harry Farbman conducting

**Most recent SLSO performance:** March 3, 2014, Juanjo Mena conducting

**Scoring:** 2 flutes (second doubling piccolo), oboe, 2 clarinets, bassoon, 2 horns, trumpet, trombone, timpani, harp, strings

**Approximate performance time:** 24 minutes

*Tim Munro is the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra's Creative Partner. A writer, broadcaster, and Grammy-winning flutist, he lives in Chicago with his wife, son, and badly-behaved orange cat.*



St. Louis Symphony  
Orchestra

stéphane denève : music director

20  
21

141st season

Leonard Slatkin, conductor

Erin Schreiber, violin

Friday, April 23, 2021 at 7:30pm

Saturday, April 24, 2021 at 7:30pm

Sunday, April 25, 2021 at 3:00pm

### BENJAMIN BRITTEN

(1913–1976)

*Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge*,

op. 10 (1937)

Introduction and Theme

Adagio

March

Romance

Aria italiana

Bourrée classique

Wiener Waltz

Moto perpetuo

Funeral March

Chant

Fugue and Finale

### MAURICE RAVEL

(1875–1937)

*Tzigane* (1924)

Erin Schreiber, violin

### ALBERTO GINASTERA

(1916–1983)

*Variaciones concertantes*, op. 23 (1953)

Theme for cello and harp—

Interlude for strings—

Playful variation for flute—

Scherzo for clarinet—

Dramatic variation for viola—

Variation for oboe and bassoon—

Rhythmic variation for trumpet and trombone—

Perpetual motion variation for violin—

Pastorale variation for horn—

Interlude for winds—

Theme for double bass—

Finale variation in the form of a rondo  
for orchestra

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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To learn more about Leonard Slatkin, Erin Schreiber, and the SLSO, visit [slo.org/musicians](https://slo.org/musicians).

# Program Notes

By Tim Munro

Picture someone you know. Perhaps an old friend, someone you miss. Think of their characteristics that make you smile: maybe a word they use often, maybe a crinkle in their forehead, maybe a way they wear their hair. What music would you match to these qualities?

Benjamin Britten's *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge* recalls his beloved first teacher: his deep seriousness, his wry sense of humor, his enthusiastic way of speaking. Maurice Ravel's *Tzigane* captures the playing and personality of a friend: her passion, her technical wizardry, a certain wildness in her spirit.

Alberto Ginastera's *Variaciones concertantes* is a portrait of a country: his native Argentina. Here in vivid detail runs the landscape, the dances, the songs, and the joys and sorrows of its people.



## BENJAMIN BRITTEN

**Born** November 22, 1913, Lowestoft, England

**Died** December 4, 1976, Aldeburgh, England

### *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge, op. 10*

Benjamin Britten grew up on the rural English coast. He lived and breathed music, but heard little outside his home. At ten, a triennial festival allowed him to be carried by the waves of Frank Bridge's *The Sea*. The experience knocked him sideways.

Later, Britten took composition lessons with Bridge. Britten was challenged to find his own musical voice through a finely honed technique. "Often I used to end these marathons in tears," Britten later wrote.

Bridge opened Britten's world, introducing him to professional musicians and artistic trends. The two became friends, playing tennis, heading off on frequent road trips. They remained close until Bridge's death.

*Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge* is a sweetly generous thank you note, a portrait of a treasured friend. Each variation captures an element of Bridge's personality. Here is Bridge as Britten knew him, a man of deep intensity and seriousness, of boyish enthusiasm and energy.

*Variations* heralds the beginning of Britten's musical maturity. His subtle harmonies shift like sand, his string ensemble produces countless colors. And there is a strain of melancholy living just below the surface of the music.

### Listening guide

**Introduction and theme.** A fanfare melts into a quiet theme: Bridge's Idyll No. 2 for string quartet, a slow waltz in shadows.

**Variation 1: *Adagio*.** "Frank Bridge's integrity and depth." Dusk darkens into immense night. Violins—Bridge's own instrument—search, strive.

**Variation 2: *March*.** "His energy." A caffeinated military gesture, darkly ironic for Bridge, a committed pacifist.

**Variation 3: *Romance*.** "His charm." A gently hummed song. The serious Bridge shows his tender side.

**Variation 4: *Aria Italiana*.** "His wit." Faux-Gioachino Rossini, with violins playing the coloratura soprano. The first of three parody variations.

**Variation 5: *Bourrée classique*.** "His humour." Faux-J.S. Bach, hardened into brittleness—an oddball dance.

**Variation 6: *Wiener walzer*.** "His tradition." Faux-Johann Strauss. Britten and Bridge playing late-night waltzes after several beers, perhaps?

**Variation 7: *Moto perpetuo*.** "His enthusiasm." An irrepressible Bridge talks and talks without pause.

**Variation 8: *Funeral march*.** "His vitality." Another irony: a sorrowful death for a person brimming with life.

**Variation 9: *Chant*.** "His reverence." Mysterious bells surround a church chant sung by viola, Bridge's instrument.

**Variation 10: *Fugue and finale*.** "His skill and our affection." Breathless academic work, then violins pour forth love.

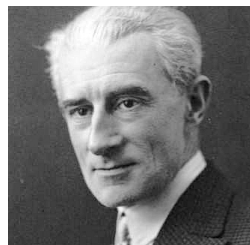
**First performance:** August 27, 1937, at the Salzburg Festival, Boyd Neel conducting

**First SLSO performance:** October 26, 1957, Paul Strauss conducting

**Most recent SLSO performance:** March 7, 2009, David Robertson conducting

**Scoring:** Strings

**Approximate performance time:** 25 minutes



## MAURICE RAVEL

**Born** March 7, 1875, Ciboure, France

**Died** December 28, 1937, Paris, France

### *Tzigane*

A London apartment, 1922. In a tight-filled room, violinist Jelly d'Arányi plays music by Maurice Ravel for a small audience, including the composer. Concert over, d'Arányi begins playing a "gypsy" melody. Ravel asks for another. Then another.

Ravel was internationally famous, but he nursed scars, from the First World War, from the death of his mother. In 1924, an episode of depression forced him to temporarily abandon a long-promised sonata for violin and piano.

His thoughts turned to d'Arányi. "You have inspired me to write a short piece of diabolical difficulty," he wrote to her. "Conjuring up the Hungary of my dreams."

*Tzigane* begins with a long, rhapsodic violin solo. Perhaps Ravel whisks us back to that smoke-filled apartment, rapt listeners in the palm of d'Arányi's hand. She was a "gutsy firebrand on the fiddle," wrote a friend, combining passion and freedom with technical chops.

The title, *Tzigane*, is a variant form of "gypsy," a term offensive to many Romani people. In fact, Ravel uses no Romani melodies, basing his folk-tinged music on Franz Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*.