Maurice Duruflé (1902-1986)
Prélude, Récitatif, et Variations, Op. 3 (1928)
For Flute, Viola, and Piano

Maurice Duruflé was a superb organist, a gifted composer, and an influential teacher. As a composer he was a perfectionist who would spend years on a work before allowing it to be published. As just one example, he spent six years writing his masterpiece, the Requiem. As a result, his output was slim: a total of 20 works, only 14 of which he allowed to be published with opus numbers, and most of which were for the organ.

Duruflé spent his early years as a boy chorister in the Rouen cathedral, where he gained intimate familiarity with plainsong and also began working as a church organist. He spent several years at the Paris Conservatoire, where he earned first prizes in composition, harmony, counterpoint, improvisation, and fugue. He soon began his lifelong career as organist at St-Etienne-du-Mont in Paris. He also began teaching harmony at the Conservatoire. And after his marriage in 1953 to the brilliant young organist Marie-Madeleine Chevalier, the pair became a renowned touring and teaching duo.

During his lifetime, Duruflé was considered a conservative composer. When he once was asked why he wrote in a relatively conservative language, he replied, "It is because I have always been surrounded by Gregorian chant, which is of course rather traditional." Yet in his compositions he combined traditional liturgical music with the musical waves sweeping early 20th-century France. Like Debussy, Duruflé combined ancient scales with impressionistic harmony. His students at the Paris Conservatoire called what they learned from him "the Duruflé style," a style influenced by the organ, by Bach, Faure, and Ravel, and by a modal language. You'll hear what they meant in the Prélude, Récitatif, et Variations, which Duruflé wrote while still a student at the Conservatoire (it won that year's composition first prize).

The piano begins the Prélude with attention-grabbing chords and Impressionistic-sounding runs. The viola enters with a tender theme, the flute comes in with its own flowing, lyrical melody, and the three elements then combine in a richly textured movement that builds in intensity until subsiding directly into the Récitatif, which like the Prélude is marked "lent et triste." While the Prélude opens with solo melodies and ends with all three instruments joining animatedly together, in the Récitatif Duruflé reverses the pattern. All three instruments open the movement, then give way to the viola, whose plaintive melody leads directly into Variations on a modal flute theme. The Variations are varied rhythmically (the second variation), modally (the third variation, with its interesting canon), and in mood, as a more somber third variation gives way to a playful fourth. The coda is animated, colorful, and joyful. Duruflé dedicated the work to Jacque Durand, the prominent music publisher of Debussy's and Ravel's works.

David Post (b. 1949)
Sound Bites for Woodwind Quintet (2024), World Premiere

Sound Bites began as a commission from the Aolis Collective, a group of Dutch double reed wind players. It was completed in 2001 and was premiered by that group at the International Double Reed Society Conference at the University of West Virginia in August of that year.

The piece languished in a desk drawer for several years, and the fact that it was scored for 2 Oboes, 2 Oboes d'Amore, 2 English horns, 2 Bassoons and a Contrabassoon,an unusual and cumbersome ensemble at best, made the chance for future performances unlikely to say the least. In 2023 I took the piece out again and discovered more possibilities than I had originally exploited in the score. Moreover, it provided an opportunity to recast the work for forces that might be more readily available, and also to tighten the writing, rebalance sonorities, and pare things down to a more economical scale.
Keeping the "bones" of the piece, I rewrote it for the standard woodwind quintet, and that is the version you will hear today.

David Post, 2025

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
Quintet for Piano and Winds in E-Flat Major, Op. 16 (1796)

Beethoven's ingenuity comes face to face with Mozart's Classical style in this delectable Quintet, which "possesses in its melodies and effects, a charm which will never grow old," as Beethoven's pupil Carl Czerny wrote. Beethoven was riding a wave of public acclaim when he wrote it. He had taken Vienna's salons by storm as a brilliant improviser and keyboard virtuoso, he had demonstrated his mastery of Viennese Classical form, and he had launched a major career as a composer. Mozart remained a fundamental influence, particularly in Beethoven's chamber music for winds. At the same time, Beethoven increasingly was asserting his own strong musical personality.
Beethoven most likely modeled the Opus 16 Wind Quintet on Mozart's Quintet for Piano and Winds, K. 452, written a dozen years earlier: Beethoven's Quintet is written in the same key of E-Flat major, scored for the same instruments, and given the same three-movement structure. You can hear external similarities throughout the Quintet, from the first movement's long, stately introduction to the last-movement rondo with its hunting theme. This being Beethoven, though, it's no surprise that he didn't stick faithfully to the Classical script. With all of Opus 16's surface nods to the Mozart Quintet, there are noteworthy substantive differences – in the way, for instance, that Beethoven focuses on thematic development, and especially in the prominent role assigned to the piano.
The appeal of the Opus 16 Quintet lies in its freshness and affability. The first movement charms with its genial themes, its engaging dialogue between piano and winds, a briefly stormy development section that ends, playfully, with a return in a Classically incorrect key, and a graceful coda. The Andante cantabile is striking for the beautiful melody with which the piano opens the movement, and for the increasingly elaborate embellishments and rich instrumental textures as the movement progresses. High spirits reign in the good-natured last movement, a rondo in which, as in the other movements, the piano glitters.
An impish Beethoven enlivened the premiere of the Quintet. According to Ferdinand Ries, in the finale "Beethoven suddenly started improvising, taking the Rondo subject as his theme and entertaining himself and those listening for quite some time. This was not the case with the accompanists, however; they were very annoyed…. It did indeed look very droll to see

these gentlemen, expecting to begin at any moment, raising their instruments to their mouths incessantly and then quietly putting them down again."

When the Quintet was published in 1801, Beethoven included a Quartet arrangement for Piano and Strings, also designated Opus 16, probably in an effort to appeal to as wide an audience as possible.

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)
Piano Trio in E minor, Op. 90, "Dumky" (1890-91)

The folk music of Bohemia was part of Dvořák's life from the time he was a small boy, when he would listen to his father, a butcher and innkeeper, play the zither at weddings and other celebrations in their village. Later young Antonín joined in, playing along on a fiddle. Later still, when he was on his way to becoming a highly regarded, Classically trained composer, he was inspired by the Czech independence movement to return to the music of his youth and incorporate its sounds and rhythms into his own music. He had no interest in a literal transcription of folk tunes; rather, he wrote original melodies and rhythms that perfectly captured the spirit of native Czech music. One of his favorite folk forms was the dumka (Czech plural dumky), a pensive, often brooding lament, originally Ukrainian, that was popular throughout the Slavic world. Dvořák gave the name to several of his works, including two piano pieces, the second movement of the A Major Piano Quintet, and of course this unconventional trio – unconventional because instead of three or four traditional movements, it is composed of six short dumky. In Dvořák's hands, the dumka becomes a work of sharply contrasting parts, from plaintive melodies to gay dances, and of rapidly changing moods that range from melancholy to jubilant.

While the Trio's six dumky are linked structurally – each is written with alternating slow and fast sections – and while all shift between major and minor modes, thematically and tonally each has its own character. Dvořák marked the first three "attaca subito," meaning that they are to be played as a unit, without pause. The first dumka, "Lento maestoso," establishes the pattern: an impassioned melody, stated first by the cello, is followed by a rollicking dance, then a return to the original mood. The opening mood of the second, "Poco adagio," is more doleful than the first, while that of the Andante third is lyrical and tranquil. Interestingly, in this third dumka it is the slower opening that is in a major key, with the dance that follows in the minor.

A sense of sadness pervades the somber, Russian-sounding fourth dumka ("Andante moderato quasi tempo di Marcia"), with its melancholy march rhythms. That mood is banished by the capricious, rhythmically driven fifth dumka, the only one marked Allegro. Here, in another reversal of pattern, the outer sections are faster than the middle. With the final dumka, "Lento maestoso," Dvořák returns to the sentiments of the first, alternating darker passages with vigorous dances before ending with a spirited outburst. Dvořák was the pianist at the Trio's premiere in Prague in April 1891, where the work was enthusiastically received, as it has been ever since.