Beyond the Double Bar

Dr. David Cole

Many listeners will hear a piece of music in concert and think “That’s great! I wonder if there are other pieces like it that I might enjoy.” Beyond the Double Bar makes suggestions for listening based on the music of each Masterworks and Small Stage concert, along with links to YouTube videos of recommended performances. If you have questions, comments, or suggestions about Beyond the Double Bar, please e-mail Dr. David Cole at dccole@swflso.org.

Masterworks II

If you enjoyed Schwantner’s Chasing Light, you might like:

- Hilary Tann: Adirondack Light
  A pastoral evocation of life in the Adirondacks, touching on both its serenity and the uncompromising nature of its environment. Written for narrator and chamber orchestra and using the words of poet Jordan Smith (from his “A Lesson from the Hudson River School: Glens Falls, New York, 1848”), Adirondack Light’s mellifluous yet often uneasy textures portray the kaleidoscopic qualities of light and water in rural upstate New York.
  
  Hilary Tann: Adirondack Light
  Tann: Adirondack Light

- Christopher Theofanidis: Rainbow Body (2000)
  Ageless Asia meets Medieval Europe, clothed in luminous orchestral colors. Christopher Theofanidis’ vividly scored work takes its inspiration from the 11th-century poet, composer, abbess and mystic, Hildegard of Bingen. Hildegard’s "Ave Maria, O Auctix Vite" serves as muse and musical anchor for this floating, colorful piece, sounding both serene and triumphant. The title is from the Buddhist concept of the soul after death being absorbed back into the universe in the form of light.
  
  Christopher Theofanidis: Rainbow Body – Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Robert Spano
  Theophanidis: Rainbow Body

- Sir Arthur Bliss: A Colour Symphony (1922)
  Once considered an enfant terrible of British music, Bliss and his works gradually faded from the limelight, though he was later knighted and made Master of the Queen’s Music. A Colour Symphony grew from Bliss’ studies in heraldry, where colors have an elaborate symbolism. The work is a four-movement symphony: Purple is a majestic procession, Red a ferocious scherzo, Blue a pulsating slow movement by turns ominous and soulful, and Green a virtuoso prelude with double fugue. Orchestrated with the brilliance of a master film composer (which Bliss was), it is a thrilling and beautiful score deserving of far more performances on this side of the Atlantic.
  
  Sir Arthur Bliss: A Colour Symphony – English Northern Philharmonia, David Lloyd-Jones
  Bliss: A Colour Symphony

If you enjoyed Elgar’s Cello Concerto, you might like:

  Finzi’s Cello Concerto is wistful, capricious, angry and sorrowful by turns; echoes of Elgar’s work can be heard throughout. Unlike Elgar’s concerto, Finzi’s ends with a hard-won optimism, the vigorous finale exhibiting elements of folk song and even just the hint of a polonaise in the orchestral tuttis. Championed by the great British conductor Sir John Barbirolli from its premiere onwards, it has only recently received advocacy from a new generation of cellists, including Yo-Yo Ma and Raphael Wallfisch.
  
  Gerald Finzi: Cello Concerto – Tim Hugh, Northern Sinfonia, Howard Griffiths
  Finzi: Cello Concerto
George Butterworth: *On the Banks of Green Willow*

Lieutenant George Butterworth was just one of many British artists (like the poets Rupert Brooke and Wilfred Owen) who never returned from the battlefields of World War One. Swallowed by the maw of the insatiable bloodthirsty beast known as the Battle of the Somme, Butterworth left a handful of compositions in the pastoral style of Vaughan Williams and Holst. This beautiful depiction of A.E. Houseman's Shropshire (the title is from a folk song from that area) is by turns both serene and melancholy.

George Butterworth: *On the Banks of Green Willow* – Academy of St.-Martin-in-the-Fields, Sir Neville Marriner

Jean Sibelius: *Tapiola*, Op. 112 (1926)

The great Finnish composer's last major work preceding his self-imposed three decades of silence. Mysterious and brooding, at times almost static, it paints no precise picture, and its formal structure is a far cry from any known model. *Tapiola*’s beauty lies in its almost palpable characterization of the vast dark forests of Sibelius’ homeland (*Tapio* is the Finnish forest god) and the masterful handling of tension and release through its 18-minute length. Instead of ending his compositional career with a period or exclamation point, Sibelius chose a question mark or an open-ended ellipsis...

Jean Sibelius: *Tapiola* -- Lahti Symphony Orchestra, Osmo Vänskä

If you enjoyed Beethoven’s Symphony No. 7, you might like:

Ludwig van Beethoven: Symphony No. 8 in F major, Op. 93

The shortest of all of Beethoven’s symphonies, and one for which the composer had a special fondness. The gently “ticking” second movement is a tribute to Johann Maelzel, the inventor of the metronome. The relentless headlong energy of the last movement is a worthy companion to the finale of the Seventh, with an added dash of humor.

Ludwig van Beethoven: Symphony No. 8 – Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, John Eliot Gardiner

Johannes Brahms: Serenade No. 1 in D major, Op. 11

Brahms when he was just emerging as Brahms. The D-major Serenade is the young composer’s first substantial orchestral work, finished in 1858 when Brahms was 25 years old. This beautiful piece begins with an ethereal solo horn over a pulsing string accompaniment and concludes with a spirited rondo that carries hints of the finale to Brahms’ Second Symphony (written nearly 20 years later). In between are a bucolic scherzo, two minuets and a ravishingly gorgeous slow movement that yields nothing to the composer’s mature works.

Johannes Brahms: Serenade No. 1 – Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Nicholas McGegan

Shostakovich: Symphony No. 9 in E-flat, Op. 90

This is “the Ninth Symphony that wasn’t.” Instead of a hyperinflated Hollywood-style Ninth in praise of Stalin, Shostakovich rejected the precedent of Beethoven and Mahler to produce this irreverent, sarcastic and hugely entertaining symphony. Scored for a modestly sized orchestra, this five-movement work’s transparent textures evoke Haydn and Mozart, with touches of humor that range from sly to slapstick – the bassoon solo at the opening of the finale is wonderfully snarky, even more so when brass and percussion add an extra degree of bombast just before the coda. While not entirely the symphonic equivalent of Looney Toons (the fourth movement probes greater emotional depths), it is a far lighter and more humorous work than Shostakovich’s preceding and subsequent symphonies (Symphonies Nos. 8 and 10).

Dmitri Shostakovich: Symphony No. 9 – Oslo Philharmonic, Mariss Jansons

Shostakovich: Symphony No. 9