

ARTISTS' PROGRAMMING VISION AND MUSIC NOTES

Ah, Paris. Perhaps the most enchanting city in the world, it has been a source of inspiration for many centuries for artists of all disciplines. Its unmatched sense of aesthetics, its long, fruitful history of artistic adventure, and its perceived freedom of "live and let live" has often enabled composers of France and indeed the world to find new sounds, enjoy a sense of discovery and liberty from restrictive dogmas.

Mozart's **Sonata K306** was one of two violin sonata composed during his somewhat bitter stay in Paris just following the death of his mother. The latter of the two, the cheerful D Major sonata breaks away from the sonata structure with Haydn-esque chutzpah, introducing a first movement development based solely on material from two measures, an absence of a recap (which later reappears in the coda), alternating meters in the last movement, and a surprise - a lengthy double cadenza, awarding the rondo a concerto proportion.

Israel's **Paul Ben Haim (1897—1984)** perhaps the best known composer of the



then young country, wrote his **Sonata in G** in 1951, during that country's love affair with France. The reaction to the recently terminated British rule, the perception that the English were not really in favour of the establishment of the Jewish State, while the French supported it and aided it in its first dangerous steps of independence, created a great cultural interest in all that was French; even the second official language was French, not English. Encouraged by the French tradition, Paul Ben Haim felt free to create an Israeli sound, reflecting the desert scenery, local folk dances (Hora), and a narrative of rough and tumble life of the first steps of statehood.

Ravel's **La Valse** illustrates the tolerant nature of Paris in its own cosmopolitan character. Intended as a tribute to Johann Strauss, *La Valse* was originally written for piano, followed by a version for two pianos, and finally as an orchestral score as an option for a ballet. Ravel described the piece as follows: "Through whirling clouds, waltzing couples may be faintly distinguished. The clouds gradually scatter: one sees...an immense hall peopled with a whirling crowd. The scene is gradually illuminated. The light of the chandeliers bursts forth at the fortissimo..."

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) was the one of the most inspiring harmony teachers at the

Paris Conservatory, mentoring, among others, young Maurice Ravel. His first violin sonata accentuates the extremely organic tonality of French music, and his mastery of always taking the harmony to the edge, continuously pushing the limits of the standard chord progressions, yet never losing a clear sense of where the music is located harmonically.

Taking a page from Faure's manual of Harmony, Ravel's **Tzigane** is a witty piece of brilliance of many layers. Creating an astonishing pastiche of gypsy violin virtuosity, it also incorporates a gypsy harmonic mode, one that has two harmonic centres. While the listeners are led to believe they are in one key, they soon discover, they are actually in another. Yet Ravel achieves this illusion most gracefully, camouflaging it in exciting bravura. (Y. Berick)

