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WEDNESDAY, JULY 24, 2019 ■ 7:30 P.M.

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND FINE ARTS CENTER CONCERT HALL

# CURTIS COMES TO KINGSTON!

SPONSORED BY URI COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

**MARAIS** Theme and 12 Couplets from *Les folies d'Espagne*  
(arr. Johannes Tappert)

**BARTÓK** *Rumanian Folk Dances*  
(arr. Arthur Levering)

*Jocul cu bta (Stick Dance)*      *Buciumeana (Hornpipe Dance)*  
*Brul (Waistband Dance)*      *Poarga romneasca (Rumanian Polka)*  
*Pe loc (Stamping Dance)*      *Maruntel (Quick Dance)*

**PIAZZOLLA** *Histoire du Tango*

*Bordel 1900*      *Night-club 1960*  
*Cafe 1930*      *Concert d'aujourd'hui*

**LUDWIG** *Three Ladino Folk Songs*

*Nani, Nani* | *Dame la mano* | *Danza torcida*

## INTERMISSION

**MOZART** *Quartet in D Major, K. 285*

*Allegro* | *Adagio* | *Rondeau: Allegretto*

**PAGANINI** *Quartet in A minor, M.S. 42*

*Maestoso*  
*Minuetto a canone: Andantino*  
*Recitativo: Andante sostenuto con sentimento*  
*Adagio cantabile*  
*Rondo: Allegretto*

## CURTIS ON TOUR ENSEMBLE ►

JOSHUA SMITH '90, FLUTE  
JORDAN DODSON '13, GUITAR  
MARIA IOUDENITCH '18, VIOLIN  
ROBERTO DIAZ '84, VIOLA  
ALBERT SEO, CELLO

CURTIS ON TOUR IS THE NINA VON MALTZAHN GLOBAL  
TOURING INITIATIVE OF THE CURTIS INSTITUTE OF MUSIC

*Please join us for a post-concert Q&A*

## Theme and 12 Couplets from *Les folies d’Espagne*

MARIN MARAIS (1656–1728)

This work is famous for having one of the oldest musical themes in the entire European tradition. The French word *folie*, a cognate for the Spanish *folia* and the English *folly*, connotes madness or empty-headedness. A 16th-Century Portuguese dance performed by shepherds or peasants, first recognized in 1577 and later introduced in Spain, it was exuberant, wild and lively, and made the participants ‘out of their minds’ or ‘mad,’ though the dance calmed down throughout Europe in the decades to follow.

In the traditional *folia*, a theme of sixteen measures (3/2 or 3/4) becomes the subject of variations. The variations that make up this work were composed over a long period, with its manuscript appearing around 1680. Based on a then-current English tradition of ‘divisions on a ground’ (the repeating of successively higher and faster parts onto a repeating bass-line), then introduced in France, it is the only work in Marais’ large catalogue not based on an original theme. The composer stated that his *Folies* could be played on the organ, harpsichord, lute, theorbo, violin and flute. Scores were adapted depending on the available players, but virtuosity was certainly required.

Many other composers, including Corelli, Bach, Handel, Cherubini, and Salieri, used the idea of repeating the “*folia*” theme in a virtuosic way; a version can be found in Liszt’s *Rhapsodie Espagnole*, and even in the second movement of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, a revelation unearthed by a musicologically-vigilant student in 1994. Rachmaninoff composed his thorny and brilliant *Variations on a Theme of Corelli*, unaware that the tune predates the work of the first composer to popularize it in a serious work.

Marais, a Parisian, must have known that the original came from the Iberian peninsula, since he attributed it to Spain in his title; there are many hints of the strumming of guitars. We’ll hear some chosen selections of this unusual work, a rare transplant from a Portuguese shepherd’s dance to a concert hall.

## Rumanian Folk Dances

BELA BARTÓK (1881–1945)

Bartók spent his early years traveling through a part of Transylvania in Hungary (now Romania), collecting folk melodies originally played on shepherd’s pipe or fiddle, and recording them on Edison phonograph cylinders. His *Romanian Dances* for piano first appeared in 1915, and were later orchestrated for small ensemble in 1917. They have been arranged for many instruments, and this one for flute and guitar was made by Arthur Levering.

Bartók’s original title was *Romanian Folk Dances from Hungary*, but he changed it when Romania occupied and annexed Transylvania in 1920. Franz Liszt, who was born in Hungary, wrote popular Hungarian Rhapsodies, and Johannes Brahms composed famous Hungarian Dances. Inspired by music played by traveling gypsies, they were far from authentic Hungarian folk music. Bartók, however, went to the source to gather the harmonies, rhythms, and melodies, feeling that their isolation from outside sources made them more authentic. He even said, “I consider it my goal in life to continue my study of Romanian folk music, at least in Transylvania, and carry it to its end...”

Though none of the six melodies are actual folk tunes, Bartók absorbed their unusual rhythmic tradition, the method of variation, and the embellishments and ornamentation of

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the tunes. Some are very lyrical, others sentimental, and a few jubilant. The score is unusual because it was written with key signatures, which Bartók rarely used.

The first came from two gypsy violinists; the second a dance for which a sash or waistband was worn, the third has a Middle Eastern feel. The last one incorporates two melodies from remote towns, played without a break.

It's easy to feel the sheer love and pride Bartók poured into these pieces, brief but full of personality, like six slightly eccentric and unpredictable siblings.

### *Histoire du Tango*

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA (1921–1992)

*Story of Tango* tells us how this sultry and passionate art form began as a form of folk music played in the bordellos and sleazy taverns of Buenos Aires around 1882, was transformed by incorporating a tinge of jazz, and eventually developed into the sophisticated music heard now throughout the world's concert halls. We'll hear this now-ubiquitous work in its original 1986 flute-and-guitar version, Piazzolla's only instrumentation, though it has been transcribed for many different combinations of instruments.

Piazzolla is single-handedly responsible for this widespread awareness of the tango, though much of the enormous popularity of his music outside of Argentina surged after his death. From age three, he actually grew up in New York City, reluctantly taking piano lessons until his father gave him a bandoneon, a kind of concertina similar to an accordion, except that the bandoneon requires mastery of four simultaneous keyboards. It was named after a German instrument maker, Heinrich Band, and was brought to Argentina a century ago by German and Italian emigrants who adapted it from religious and popular use to play the genre known as *milonga*, the predecessor of the tango.

By age sixteen, Piazzolla was playing the instrument in New York clubs and gave up a chance to go to Hollywood before returning home to his birthplace, where the Argentinian tango was now its signature. Besides playing in many bands, he continually studied music theory and composition and, in 1954, headed to Paris to study with Nadia Boulanger, who had students as varied as Aaron Copland, Philip Glass, Quincy Jones, and Elliot Carter. In her perceptive way, she urged the young composer not to follow current trends, but to build upon his love of the tango and imbue it with some formal classical techniques.

Returning home, he launched what was immediately called "Nuevo Tango," the new tango, an art form that wasn't sung or danced to, but absorbed as a work of serious chamber music. A wealth of works was to follow, but this piece, written only two years before Piazzolla's death, demonstrates the enormous range of moods in this now-sophisticated music.

*Story of Tango* begins with lusty exuberance in "Bordello 1900," expressing its raunchy beginnings; exudes a melancholy sense of longing and haunting personal expression in "Café 1930," when tango was listened to as much as danced to; takes on a saucy flavor of sizzling improvisation with bossa nova combining with the older rhythms in "Nightclub 1960"; and is brought up to Piazzolla's present with "Concert d'aujourd'hui," as Stravinsky, Bartók and other composers used the tango's rhythms as it wended its way into the concert hall.

All these diverse moods, and the emergence of a serious art form, are packed into this brief microcosm of a currently-flourishing, resurrected, musical and national culture. Piazzolla probably wouldn't mind, though, if you got up and danced the tango during its playing.

## Three Ladino Folk Songs

DAVID LUDWIG (B. 1974)

My “Three Ladino Folk Songs” are a re-imagining of traditional folk songs that have roots in the Judeo-Spanish Ladino culture. The piece seeks to find common ground between contemporary western techniques and the ancient practices that reached from Northern Africa to Central Asia in this far-flung musical tradition. Originally for Arabic violin, guitar, and percussion, I have made an arrangement of three of the songs for Western classical violin, guitar, and cello; each reflecting different regions of the world where Ladino music took root, and each with a style and sound particular to those regions.

The Ladino language itself is spoken by fewer and fewer people now; to be able to hear these melodies and compose my own arrangement of them is a special experience to share, and I am grateful to scholars like Isaac Levy and others for preserving these beautiful tunes, themselves. — *David Ludwig*

## Quartet in D Major, K. 285

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)

This joyful, bubbly piece was written, as was typical of some of Mozart’s early works, under stressful circumstances. Working as concertmaster and organist for the Archbishop of Salzburg, who intended to reduce the court’s musical activities, the young musician requested leave to play at other courts; the Archbishop said he didn’t want his servants “running around like beggars.” He even told Mozart he “knows nothing” and “ought to go to a conservatory in Naples in order to learn music.” So much for inspirational advice!

Mozart resigned and, accompanied by his mother, began a lengthy trip in hopes of picking up a few commissions. In Mannheim, a gentleman named Willem De Jean offered him 200 guilders for three brief concertos and a few flute quartets. In those days, the flute was considered a gentleman’s instrument, perhaps because it was a favorite of the King of Prussia.

The project didn’t go well, since Mozart only completed two concertos and three quartets, and was only paid 96 guilders. He wrote to his father, “You know how stupid I am, when I have to compose for one instrument (and one that I dislike).” That statement is often quoted, but considering the magnificent use he made of the flute in later works, it’s hard to believe. Many things may have just made him grumpy — a romance with singer Aloysia Weber didn’t work out (though he would later marry her sister Costanze) — and his father continually badgered him about his lack of steady income. He eventually finished the commission and was paid, but his mother Maria Anna would soon die on their trip to Paris.

In this brilliant quartet, the flute enters with a flying start, playing the opening melody with grace, fluidity, and concerto-like dominance. A second theme, seeming to continually reach higher, is developed in the center until the opening is repeated.

The adagio movement is one of the most beautiful pieces ever composed for the instrument; in B Minor, a rare key for Mozart, the flowing melody is backed by pizzicato strings at the outset. Sometimes called a cantilena, this troubadour-like outpouring of inspiration makes it hard to imagine the composer not liking the sound of the instrument.

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It leads to a brief, buoyant rondo, full of echoes between the flute and the first violin. This sparkling, flowing movement demonstrates once again that genius — even budding genius — has little relation to the circumstances of the creator.

Mozart wrote to his father: “Of course, I could scratch away at it all day long; but such a thing as this goes out into the world, so it is my wish that I need not be ashamed that it carries my name.”

### **Quartet in A Minor, M.S. 42**

**NICCOLÒ PAGANINI (1782–1840)**

In our time, we imagine Paganini as the most famed violinist of his time-- a pale, thin presence dressed in black, who would arrive at concerts in a black carriage pulled by four black horses, never used music, and whose fabulous virtuosity was feared to be resulting from a deal with the devil.

That’s the image he surely wanted to portray, but only the virtuosity told the real story. As a brilliant young artist, whose famed teacher claimed not to be able to teach him anything, he was one of the first touring artists. Gambling, drinking, and many scandalous love affairs caused rocky periods amid his fame and success. His debts once necessitated his pawning his violin, and a French merchant loaned him a precious Guarneri. After hearing him play, the man gave him the instrument.

Paganini’s biographers claimed that as a still young and famed personality, he temporarily lost interest in the violin thanks to the lure of a wealthy Tuscan woman who played the guitar. At her estate for three years, he practiced the instrument fanatically, while teaching, performing, and composing, beginning a large catalogue of sixty sonatas for violin and guitar and fifteen guitar quartets. Almost all of his chamber music was written for the guitar.

Back on the European concert scene, Paganini became very wealthy and amassed an enormous collection of Stradivari violins. He also began to love the throatier sound of the viola, which he often played; he may also have appreciated its rarity, since Stradivari made only twelve violas.

The fifteenth and last quartet honors that instrument. It begins with the viola immediately taking charge, with fiery fiddling and long-lined leaps played with a flourish; the violin has a major role, soon echoed by the viola, and in the center of this extended movement, the cello enters with a yearning line.

Paganini shows a little attitude in the second-movement minuetto, as the dance-like theme continually stops suddenly. In the center, the guitar finally has a chance to shine, playing a near-vocal line of its own besides its usual accompanying figures. The recitativo is brief, but very passionately written, and a tender adagio cantabile follows, with viola taking the usual lead in an operatic line with pizzicato string cushions. The final rondo brings everyone together in relatively equal partnership, with a gypsy flavor and the viola eventually taking its usual dominance before a false coda and a flashy conclusion.

*Notes by Tom Di Nardo*