

Four Piano Blues III. Muted and sensuous (1948)	Aaron Copland (1900-1990)
Adagio in Bm, K.540	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)
Für Alina	Arvo Pärt (b. 1935)
Intermezzi, Op. 76, Nos. 3 and 4	Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
Sonata in D major R 86	Antonio Soler (bap. 1729, d.1873)

### Program Notes:

#### Four Piano Blues Aaron Copland III. Muted and sensuous (1948)

Aaron Copland (1900-1990) was an American composer who helped create a distinctively “American style.” Copland studied piano from a young age and began composing short works by the age of 12. Instead of going to a university after graduating from high school, he studied composition with Rubin Goldmark for three years, then studied with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, as did many other young American composers after him. While some of his early works faced criticism, by the late 1930s and early 1940s, Copland’s works achieved wide popularity, including his ballet *Appalachian Spring*, which won the Pulitzer Prize and the New York Music Critics’ Circle Award. Copland wrote “Four Piano Blues” between 1926-48. He dedicated each piece in the set to a different prominent pianist who had a close connection with his piano music. The third movement is dedicated to William Kapell, an American pianist who performed many works of Aaron Copland before his death at the age of 31. While this movement is not “blues” in a strict sense, there are many elements of blues and jazz, including syncopations, changing meters, and ninth chords.

#### Adagio in Bm, K.540 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) was an Austrian composer of the Classical era and was, along with Haydn and Beethoven, part of the First Viennese School. At the age of 25, Mozart returned to Vienna where he embarked on some of his most successful and busy years as a composer. K.540 was written in 1788 at the end of what is considered his golden age, when he began a financial downfall. There were no obvious tragic events in Mozart’s life at the time he wrote this composition, but it is possible that the B minor key suggests that it was meant for inclusion in a sonata in E minor that was never completed before Mozart’s premature death. This piece is considered Mozart’s finest single piano work by English musicologist Arthur Hutchings, and Mozart scholar Alfred Einstein called it “one of the most perfect, most deeply felt, and most despairing of all his works.” This movement is in sonata form, ending with a short coda.

#### Für Alina Arvo Pärt

Arvo Pärt (b. 1935) is an Estonian composer who, since the 1970s, has primarily composed in a minimalist style he created called “tintinnabuli.” Much of Pärt’s music is inspired by Gregorian

chant. From 2011 to 2018, he was the most performed living composer in the world. *Für Alina* was composed in 1976 and debuted in a concert with 6 other works that introduced his new style of composition. The piece is dedicated to a family friend's daughter after she moved away from her family, as a consolation to her mother who missed her child. The notation is fairly simple with no time signature and stemless note heads. The piece is in B minor and, except for one note, the left-hand plays only notes that appear in the B minor chord. Each measure has one more note than the last, going up to 7 notes, then one less note until the final measure, which contains just one note. This piece has been used in film soundtracks such as *Foxcatcher* (2014) and *Mostly Martha* (2001).

#### Intermezzi, Op. 76, Nos. 3 and 4 - Johannes Brahms

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) was a German composer and pianist of the Romantic era. The Klavierstücke that comprise Op. 76 are from the latter phase of his piano works. Most were composed in 1878. There are 8 pieces in this opus, which alternate between the designations "capriccio" and "intermezzo." No. 3 and No. 4 are both titled "Intermezzo." An intermezzo is a musical term for a piece that goes between other works, such as acts of a play or movements of a larger musical work such as an opera. No. 3 creates an ethereal mood with a bell-like right hand melody over an arpeggiated left hand. One interesting effect Brahms created is in the left hand's staccatos, while pedal is still required to create legato in the right hand, so an interesting combination of staccato and legato is created. No. 4 has a much darker tone, featuring constant, turbulent sixteenth-note motion.

#### Sonata in D major R 86 Antonio Soler

Antonio Soler (bap. 1729, d.1873) was a Catalan composer and organist. He studied music at Escolanía, a famous music school in the monastery of Montserrat. In 1752, he became the permanent organist for the Hieronymite order at El Escorial, where he was the Maestro de Capilla and composed a substantial number of his works. The Sonata in D major, R. 86, one of his 120 keyboard sonatas, would have originally been played on the harpsichord. Throughout the piece, there are many trills typical of harpsichord music. They add brilliance and serve to highlight points of musical interest, as harpsichords are not touch-sensitive like pianos, which allow performers to shape phrases dynamically and vary volume levels greatly. Harpsichords with two manuals can play loud or soft but cannot crescendo in between those levels; therefore, each section typically has one overall dynamic, with crescendos or decrescendos not available as expressive devices. This sonata, much like his others, bears many similarities to Scarlatti's sonatas, especially in the bipartite form of the piece, with two major sections that are repeated.

Link to recording: <https://youtu.be/mnrBxcM-4OY>