

Spring Awakenings

April 11, 2026 at 7:30 pm

Descriptions & links to recordings of the music programmed on the April “Spring Awakenings” concert.

Embrace the joy and renewal of springtime with music inspired by the vitality of this beautiful season. Conductor Geoffrey Gallegos leads the orchestra in a vibrant program featuring Copland’s “Appalachian Spring” and music of Delius, Glazunov, and Schumann that brings the sounds of nature to life.

The Program

Glazunov: Spring: A Musical Tableau for Orchestra ~~“Spring” from The Seasons~~

Copland: Appalachian Spring

Delius: On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring

Schumann: Symphony No. 1 (“Spring”)

Details Below

Glazunov: Spring: A Musical Tableau for Orchestra

Alexander Glazunov - Spring, musical picture for orchestra, Op. 34

(1891) <https://youtu.be/3DxvYAl5ue0>

Alexander Konstantinovich Glazunov (Алекса́ндр Константи́нович Глазуно́в, 10 August 1865 – 21 March 1936) was a Russian composer, music teacher, and conductor of the late Russian Romantic period. He served as director of the Saint Petersburg Conservatory between 1905 and 1928 and was instrumental in the reorganization of the institute into the Petrograd Conservatory, then the Leningrad Conservatory, following the Bolshevik Revolution. He continued heading the Conservatory until 1930, though he had left the Soviet Union in 1928 and did not return. The best-known student under his tenure during the early Soviet years was Dmitri Shostakovich.

Orchestration

piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets in A, bass clarinet in A, two bassoons, four horns in F, three trombones*, tuba*, Glockenspiel, timpani, harp, and strings. [*low brass only play three chords (reinforcing the horns)]

Spring, Op. 34 [In Russian, Весна] 1891

This is a fourteen-minute tone poem, similar in scope and style to Glazunov's overtures. It is not the same music as the "Spring," the second tableau of Glazunov's ballet The Seasons, op. 67. Dedicated to Nikolay Sokolov (1860–1908,) a Russian poet and writer who collaborated with Glazunov in Saint Petersburg.

Spring was composed in 1891. Glazunov acknowledged his debt to the Russian romantic poet Fyodor Tyutchev (Фёдор Тютчев, 1803-73) by including the last stanza from his 1829 poem Весенние воды [Vesenniye vody/Spring snowmelt], titles "musical picture" on the first page of the orchestral score:

Spring snowmelt

Still, the fields display white patches of snow,

While the spring snowmelt trickles noisily underneath —

The meltwater rushes along, waking up the sleeping riverbank,

Rushing, and sparkling, and it shouts:

It shouts to the ends of the earth:
Spring is coming, spring is coming,
We herald the first days of spring,
[And spring] has sent us in advance [of her arrival].
Spring is coming, spring is coming,
And calm, warm May days
[In a rosy-cheeked, colorful ring dance
Throng merrily around her!... »

The work establishes a dreamy Andantino landscape in D major, overlaid by birdlike solos in the flutes. This serenade-like music frames the whole work in a loose ternary form (roughly ABA), dispelling the urgent feeling of spring's arrival in Tyutchev's poem. Unusually for Glazunov's orchestral writing, the harp is gently dominant throughout, and its constant rustling becomes an important intensifier of the light, transparent texture. The woodwinds, led by the clarinets, act more as soloists than as a unified woodwind choir, passing the melody back and forth to create a lazy midday feeling, punctuated by bells.

A horn trio briefly leads us to A major, through a sustained diminished triad [C-sharp, E, G] at rehearsal I (p. 18). This new texture becomes gently chromatic, increasing the dramatic tension by adding the note A, and thus emerging as dominant seventh chords of the opening tonic [A, C-sharp, E, G, preparing a return to D]. A third key area of E-flat major briefly extends the transition chromatically with a few dancelike strikes from the timpani. Long soloistic passages for flute, piccolo, and clarinet, are slowly re-absorbed into the strings.

At rehearsal M, the low strings sustain a dominant pedal (A) underneath sparkling woodwinds, leading us to the work's recapitulation in D major: violins and celli restate the soaring opening theme, and the low brass finally announce the arrival of the crowd. Glazunov experiments with a new texture here: he features the viola section, allows the woodwinds to dance pentatonically over a communal round

dance in 6/8 meter, and adds many expressive markings which build to a joyous, vibrant climax.

Biography

Alexander Glazunov was a prominent Russian composer who became a professor (1899-1905) and later the director of the Saint Petersburg/Petrograd/Leningrad Conservatory (1905-1930), shepherding it through the turbulent times of the Bolshevik Revolution. During his tenure he worked tirelessly to improve the curriculum, raise standards, defend the institute's autonomy through many political regimes, and establish an opera studio and students' philharmonic orchestra. His early music was praised by Borodin, Stasov, and the young Stravinsky, but was considered old-fashioned by his best-known student, Dmitri Shostakovich, who attended the Petrograd Conservatory from 1919-1925.

Glazunov left Russia in 1928 to perform at the Schubert centenary celebrations in Vienna, and then toured as a conductor through seven European countries and the United States (the latter appearances organized by Sol Hurok). He settled in Paris in 1929, where he conducted the first electrical recording of his 1899 one-act ballet *The Seasons*. Glazunov was able to preserve his reputation during the Soviet period by claiming he could not return due to "ill health."

Info pulled from https://repertoire-explorer.musikmph.de/wp-content/uploads/vorworte_prefaces/1394-vw.pdf

Copland: Appalachian Spring

Aaron Copland: "Appalachian Spring" with Alan Gilbert | NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra

<https://youtu.be/1DlVh9RFfws?si=L7AgiMu4K8dPWgR7>

<https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/national-recording-preservation-board/documents/CoplandAppalachianSpring.pdf>

"Copland Conducts Copland: Appalachian Spring"-- Aaron Copland (1974)

Added to the National Registry: 2013

Essay by Michael Boriskin (guest post)*

"I was quite amazed when my music won so many awards and became so popular," recalled composer Aaron Copland about the ballet "Appalachian Spring." "When you are working on a piece, you don't think it might have use past the immediate purpose for its composition, and you certainly don't consider its lasting power. You are so relieved just to have it finished for the premiere!" Copland and his creative partner, choreographer Martha Graham, thought the simple story of frontier love, community, perseverance, and fidelity could serve as the foundation for a compelling piece of theater --"a legend of American living," according to Graham's initial script. They could not have predicted that the triumphant premiere of "Appalachian Spring" heard at the Library of Congress in October 1944 would soon be followed by widespread popularity and critical accolades, and then a rapid ascent to iconic status as a landmark in 20th century American music and modern dance.

"Appalachian Spring" brought Copland and Graham together for their only collaboration; though both were only in their 40s, they were two of America's most formidable artistic figures. Graham was one of the pioneers of modern dance in the US, and Copland had already become regarded as the "Dean of American Composers." They had long admired each other's work, and had hoped to be able to find a suitable project on which to partner. In the early 1940s,

Graham crafted the outlines of a tale that appealed to Copland about struggle and survival, renewal, friendship, and faithfulness. The concept evolved before assuming its final form, with early versions referencing the Bible, Native Americans, the Civil War, the American Southwest, and New England. Always present, though, was what Copland called “the essence of Martha’s ideas,” and, according to an early draft, “the inner frame that holds together a people.” Copland wrote that the working version of the narrative “concerned a pioneer celebration in spring around a newly-built farmhouse in the Pennsylvania hills in the early part of the [19th] century ... it had to do with the pioneer American spirit, with youth and spring, with optimism and hope.” The story and its musical embodiment would resonate deeply--first with a nation that had experienced years of economic upheaval, violent conflict at home, and war abroad, and then with succeeding generations near and far. (The supremely-gifted cast in the premiere production included an array of artists in the early stages of their careers, who subsequently left lasting and influential legacies in their fields, including dancers Merce Cunningham, Erick Hawkins, and May O’Donnell, and artist and sculptor Isamu Noguchi.)

Copland’s task in “Appalachian Spring” was to find “the feeling and the spirit.” He encountered a then-obscure Shaker song that epitomized for him the sound world and musical character of the whole ballet. “I felt that ‘Simple Gifts,’” he later explained, “was ideal for Martha’s scenario and for the kind of austere movements associated with her choreography.” The song would subsequently form the core of a series of variations at the climax of the entire work. The prominence of “Simple Gifts” in “Appalachian Spring” led to the song’s nationwide popularity as an emblematic piece of Americana.

Blazing a trail into the American vernacular for generations of US composers who followed him, Copland’s historic importance rests on his helping to create and define this nation’s musical identity in concert, ballet, and film. Well into the early 20th century, American concert composers were continuing to create music in the mold of the great European masters who either taught or influenced them. Already as a young man in the early 1920s, Copland was determined to “make an American-sounding music,” and was soon integrating jazz into several major

works. In the 1930s and 1940s, he created a number of indelibly evocative works that were based upon American iconography (Lincoln, the common man, the Open West, cowboy lore and heartland legends, smalltown life, etc.), and that have become deeply embedded in the cultural consciousness of the US “Appalachian Spring” heads that list.

While “Appalachian Spring” has been widely acclaimed as “the quintessential American dance work” (“The New York Times”), Copland’s memorable score took on a life of its own soon after the premiere. The music won both the 1945 Pulitzer Prize in Music and that year’s coveted New York Music Critics’ Circle Award.

His ballet score was composed for a chamber ensemble of 13 instruments, a limitation imposed by space requirements in the Coolidge Auditorium at the Library of Congress, as well as financial constraints. Already thinking of the prospects for concert performances of the music alone, Copland extracted a suite from the ballet and scored it for full symphony orchestra, eliminating only about 10 minutes of music he deemed to be primarily of choreographic interest. In this version, it was immediately introduced by the New York Philharmonic and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, which made the premiere recording, and then performed extensively by orchestras around the U.S. and the world.

In connection with a planned performance in the 1950s of the complete ballet by the Philadelphia Orchestra, Copland went back and scored for full orchestra the music he had removed from the symphonic suite. By the late 1960s, Copland had been persuaded to publish the suite in its original scoring for 13 instruments, despite his earlier misgivings about offering a small-ensemble version of a composition that had become widely known in its more glamorous setting for full orchestra. “In time,” he recalled later, “I have come to think that the original instrumentation has a clarity and is closer to my original conception than the more opulent orchestrated version.”

Over the decades, there have been countless recordings of the various versions of “Appalachian Spring,” often by many of the world’s most famous conductors with leading international orchestras. But a recording like this one, presided over by its composer, carries special interest and meaning, and remains irreplaceable--

especially as it is of the complete original version in its chamber-ensemble scoring. Having a concert composer record his or her own music is often illuminating, by conveying the creator's thoughts and goals in an actual performance--and in a lasting form. Copland recognized the importance of this, and took advantage of every opportunity to record his own music, either as conductor or pianist, even if he regarded working in front of the microphones as more nerve-wracking than performing live. Copland's conducting, here as elsewhere, is of a whole with his composition. Like his music, this recording is full of character, understated and direct, poised and dignified, spacious, buoyant, and warmly expressive. While recordings by others may offer greater instrumental virtuosity, sonic refinement, and conductorial dazzle, this recording is one to cherish for its humanity, rectitude, deep musicality, and quiet joy in living.

Pianist Michael Boriskin has performed in over 30 countries, recorded extensively for a dozen labels, and served as a program advisor or artistic consultant for major institutions across the US. He is the longtime Artistic and Executive Director of Copland House, the award-winning creative center for American music based at Aaron Copland's National Historic Landmark home near New York City.

** The views expressed in this essay are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Library of Congress.*

<https://www.riphil.org/blog/the-story-behind-coplands-appalachian-spring>

THE STORY BEHIND: Copland's Appalachian Spring

Title: Appalachian Spring: Orchestral Suite

Composer: Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

Orchestration: The piece is scored for piccolo, two each of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, trumpets and trombones, harp, piano, timpani, percussion and strings.

The Story:

By 1943, Aaron Copland had attained a considerable reputation as a ballet composer with *Billy the Kid* and *Rodeo* to his credit. Those works had also helped to establish him as an accessible composer of what many people considered to be the sound of American music, which evokes the vast American landscape and pioneer spirit. It was natural, then, that choreographer Martha Graham should come to Copland that year with a commission from the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation and a scenario set in rural

Pennsylvania of the early 19th century. Copland accepted the commission and completed the ballet the following spring.

The original version of *Appalachian Spring* (title from a poem by Hart Crane) was scored for only 13 instruments and premiered in Washington, D.C., alongside works by Hindemith and Milhaud in October 1944. Copland's music was an immediate success, and the following May, Graham's company danced it in New York. In 1945, *Appalachian Spring* won for Copland not only the New York Music Critics Circle Award for dramatic music that season, but also the Pulitzer Prize in music.



Copland arranged the ballet as a continuous suite for full orchestra, which the New York Philharmonic premiered in October 1945. That version, which preserves most of the music of the original ballet, is the form in which we usually hear *Appalachian Spring* today.

According to notes by Copland himself, there are eight distinct sections:

1. Very slowly. Introduction of the characters, one by one, in a suffused light.
2. Fast. Sudden burst of unison strings . . . starts the action.
3. Moderate. Duo for the Bride and her Intended—scene of tenderness and passion.
4. Quite fast. The revivalist and his flock. Folksy feelings—suggestions of square dances and country fiddlers.
5. Still faster. Solo dance of the Bride—presentiment of motherhood. Extremes of joy and fear and wonder.
6. Very slowly (as at first). Transition scenes reminiscent of the introduction.
7. Calm and flowing. Scenes of daily activity for the Bride and her Farmer- husband. There are five variations on a Shaker theme. The theme, sung by a solo clarinet, is called “Simple Gifts.”
8. Moderate. Coda. The Bride takes her place among her neighbors. . . . Muted strings intone a hushed, prayer-like passage. . . . The close is reminiscent of the opening music.

Program Notes by Dr. Michael Fink © 2019 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Delius: On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring

Frederick Delius: On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring | Vasily Petrenko / HKPhil

<https://youtu.be/6nuw9rEB1kU>

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/On_Hearing_the_First_Cuckoo_in_Spring

On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring is a [tone poem](#) composed in 1912 by [Frederick Delius](#). Together with [Summer Night on the River](#) it is one of Delius's *Two Pieces for Small Orchestra*. The two were first performed in [Leipzig](#) on 23 October 1913, conducted by [Arthur Nikisch](#). *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* is the longer of the two pieces, with a typical playing time of between six and seven minutes. There have been numerous recordings of the piece, which Delius's champion [Sir Thomas Beecham](#) described as much the best known of the composer's works.

Background and first performance

In the first years of the 20th century, [Frederick Delius](#) was better known in Continental Europe than in his native Britain. He lived in France and had most of his musical success in Germany.^{[1][2]} His compositions from this period include [Songs of Sunset](#) (1906–07), [Briqq Fair](#) (1907) and [In a Summer Garden](#) (1908).^[3] He completed the first of his *Two Pieces for Small Orchestra* – [Summer Night on the River](#) – in 1911, and worked on the second, *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* during 1912.^[4]

The two works were first given in [Leipzig](#) by the [Gewandhaus Orchestra](#) conducted by [Arthur Nikisch](#) on 23 October 1913.^[4] Although completed second, *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* is designated the first of the two, which were billed as "Stimmungsbilder" – "mood-pictures" – with the titles "Beim ersten Kuckucksruf im Frühling" and "Sommernacht am Flusse".^[4] The first performance in Britain was presented by the [Royal Philharmonic Society](#) at a [Queen's Hall](#) concert on 20 January 1914, conducted by [Willem Mengelberg](#).^[5]

Publication and arrangements

The score is dedicated to the composer and musical benefactor [Balfour Gardiner](#).^[4] It was first published by Tischer & Jagenburg of [Cologne](#) in 1914. In 1930 the [Oxford University Press](#) published the score.^[4] The full title of the piece in the published score is *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring (Introducing a Norwegian Folk Song)*.^[4] The manuscript is lost, but a draft version survives, held by the Grainger Museum, [Melbourne](#).^[4]

There have been numerous arrangements of the piece. [Gerard Bunk](#) arranged a version for solo piano in 1914, [Peter Warlock](#) made a version for [piano duo](#) in 1930, [Eric Fenby](#) arranged it for organ in 1934 and Rudolf Schmidt-Wunstorf made a version for two pianos in 1952. There are also versions for wind band (1969) and brass band (1976).^[4]

Music

The playing time of the piece is typically between six and seven minutes, although a few recorded performances are quicker or slower than this.^[n 1] The piece opens in C major in ⁶

⁴ with a slow three-bar sequence. The main theme, marked "With easy flowing movement",^[7] is an exchange of [cuckoo](#) calls, first for [oboe](#), then for divided strings. The second theme is scored for first violins, and is taken from a [Norwegian folksong](#), "In Ola Valley", which was brought to Delius's attention by the composer and folksong arranger [Percy Grainger](#). The theme had earlier been used by [Edvard Grieg](#) in the 14th of his *19 Norwegian Folksongs*, Op. 66. Grainger compared the two treatments: "Grieg's is concentrated, pristine, miniature and drastic ... Delius's has the opulent richness of an almost over-ripe fruit and the luxurious long decline of a sunset".^[8] The [clarinet](#) returns with the cuckoo calls before the piece ends quietly.

Critical reception

[Sir Thomas Beecham](#), Delius's most prominent British champion,^[9] called *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* "easily the best known of all our composer's output".^[10] Beecham said of this piece and the companion *Summer Night on the*

River: "In their respective ways they touch perfection, although I cannot agree with the judgment of one commentator that they display Frederick's powers of orchestration at their best. After all they are miniatures and written primarily for small groups of players".^[10]

Commentators have differed about whether the pastoral scene is an English one. In a 1973 study [Lionel Carley](#) wrote that the music gives "an instinctive feeling that, wherever the inspiration may be rooted, an essentially English natural setting is being evoked".^[11] In 2004 [Diana McVeagh](#) wrote of the Delius miniatures, "These exquisite idylls, for all their composer's German descent and French domicile, spell 'England' for most listeners".^[1] In 2018 Daniel Grimley suggested "the music's 'place' is really Norway/Germany as much as the English countryside".^[12]

[Christopher Palmer](#) followed Grainger in comparing Delius's and Grieg's treatment of the folk tune:

The First Cuckoo is no modest essay in folk-song-like ingenuous freshness; on the contrary it is considerably sophisticated. The "Ola Valley" theme is interwoven with another (uncredited but noticeably redolent of the "Student's Serenade" in [Grieg's] *Moods*, Op. 73) which appears at the beginning and in a short element of recapitulation and conditions the rhythmic substance and general atmosphere of the piece.^[13]

Palmer comments that unlike Grieg, Delius treats the tune very freely, creating "a gently persistent liquefaction of harmony".^[13]

Discography ...

Schumann: Symphony No. 1 (“Spring”)

Schumann: <https://youtu.be/MFYQrhhZz7w>

Experience the vibrant energy of Robert Schumann's Symphony No. 1 in B-flat Major, Op. 38, often referred to as the "Spring Symphony"! Composed in 1841, this masterpiece captures the essence of renewal and joy, inspired by the changing seasons and the poetry of Adolf Böttger. Schumann's wife, the brilliant pianist and composer Clara Schumann, played a pivotal role in connecting him to Böttger's poem *Frühlingsgedicht* (Spring Poem), which became a source of inspiration for this radiant work.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._1_\(Schumann\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._1_(Schumann))

Symphony No. 1 (Schumann)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Symphony No. 1, *Spring Symphony*

by [Robert Schumann](#)



Schumann, in an 1839 lithograph by [Josef Kriehuber](#)

Key [B-flat major](#)

[Opus](#) 38

Composed	23 January – 20 February 1841
Dedication	Frederick Augustus II of Saxony ^[1]
Published	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1841 (ed. Breitkopf & Härtel)
Movements	4
Premiere	
Date	31 March 1841
Location	Leipzig
Conductor	Felix Mendelssohn
Performers	Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra ^[2]

The **Symphony No. 1** in B♭ major, [Op.](#) 38, also known as the ***Spring Symphony***, is the first completed symphonic work composed by [Robert Schumann](#).

Background

Although he had made some "symphonic attempts" in the autumn of 1840 soon after he married [Clara Wieck](#), he did not compose his first symphony until early 1841. Until then, Schumann was largely known for his works for the piano and for voice. Clara encouraged him to write symphonic music, noting in her diary, "it would be best if he composed for orchestra; his imagination cannot find sufficient scope on the piano... His compositions are all orchestral in feeling... My highest wish is that he should compose for orchestra—that is his field! May I succeed in bringing him to it!"^[3]

Schumann sketched the symphony in four days from 23 to 26 January and completed the [orchestration](#) by 20 February.^[4] The premiere took place under the baton of [Felix Mendelssohn](#) on 31 March 1841 in Leipzig, where the symphony was warmly received.^[5] According to Clara's diary, the title "Spring Symphony" was bestowed upon it due to [Adolf Böttger](#)'s poem *Frühlingsgedicht*. The symphony's opening has traditionally been associated with the closing lines of Böttger's poem, "*O wende, wende deinen Lauf/Im Thale blüht der Frühling auf!*" ("O, turn, O turn and change your course/In the valley, Spring blooms forth!"). This view has been challenged, and the call of a Leipzig nightwatchman has been mentioned as an alternative source.^[6]

In a letter to [Wilhelm Taubert](#), Schumann wrote:

Could you breathe a little of the longing for spring into your orchestra as they play? That was what was most in my mind when I wrote [the symphony] in January 1841. I should like the very first trumpet entrance to sound as if it came from on high, like a summons to awakening. Further on in the introduction, I would like the music to suggest the world's turning green, perhaps with a butterfly hovering in the air, and then, in the Allegro, to show how everything to do with spring is coming alive... These, however, are ideas that came into my mind only after I had completed the piece.^[1]

Structure

External audio

Performed by the [Berlin Philharmonic](#) under [Herbert von Karajan](#)

 [I. Andante un poco maestoso](#)

 [II. Larghetto](#)

 [III. Scherzo \(Molto vivace\)](#)

 [IV. Allegro animato e grazioso](#)

The symphony is scored for two [flutes](#), two [oboes](#), two [clarinets](#), two [bassoons](#), four [horns](#), two [trumpets](#), three [trombones](#), [timpani](#), [triangle](#) and [strings](#). Schumann especially expanded the use of [timpani](#) in the symphony, using the unusual tuning of B \flat , G \flat , and F in the first movement, and D, A, and F in the third, at the suggestion of Schumann's cousin-in-law, Ernst Pfundt. It was the first major orchestral work of its style to require three timpani.^[7] Schumann made some revisions until the definitive full-score of the symphony was published in 1853. The playing time of the symphony is about 29–31 minutes, depending upon the interpretation.

The symphony has four movements:

- I. [Andante](#) un poco maestoso – [Allegro](#) molto vivace ([B \$\flat\$ major](#))
- II. [Larghetto](#) ([E \$\flat\$ major](#))

There is no pause between the 2nd and 3rd movements.

- III. [Scherzo](#): Molto vivace ([D minor](#)) – Trio I: Molto piu vivace ([D major](#)) – Trio II (B♭ major)
– [Coda](#): Come sopra ma un poco più lento – Quasi [presto](#) – Meno presto (D major)
- IV. Allegro animato e grazioso (B♭ major)

Originally, each movement had its own title, with the first movement nicknamed "The Beginning of Spring", the second "Evening", the third "Merry Playmates", and the last "Spring in Full Bloom". However, Schumann withdrew the titles before publication.^[8] The first movement was described by the composer as a "summons to awakening", and "The vernal passion that sway men until they are very old, and which surprises them with each year."^[9] One scholar wrote that "If that makes this a kind of Last Judgment, then the rest of the symphony is a Garden of Heavenly Delights."^[10] The first trio of the third movement quotes motifs from the first movement. The last movement of the symphony also uses the final theme of [Kreisleriana](#), and therefore recalls the romantic and fantastic inspiration of the composer's piano compositions.