

Recognized as a pianistic prodigy, New Orleans-born Louis Moreau Gottschalk was sent to Paris at the age of 13 to receive a classical training not yet available in the U.S. in the 1840s. Like Belgian composer César Franck and Russian pianist Nikolai Rubinstein, Gottschalk was denied admission to the Paris Conservatory based on his nationality, where the head of the piano faculty stated that “America is a country of steam engines....” While still a teenager, Gottschalk played for Chopin who realized his extreme talent and said, “I predict you will become the king of pianists.” Gottschalk would go on to concertize mostly in the Caribbean and South America combining Afro-Cuban rhythms with European virtuosity. Though born in the American South, Gottschalk supported the Union forces during the Civil War and in 1862 composed “**Union**” featuring three familiar patriotic melodies. After a dramatic introduction, “The Star-Spangled Banner” is heard first. Presented in a melancholic fashion, Gottschalk introduces a new pianistic technique where full chords are struck staccato except for melody and occasional harmony. Before “The Star-Spangled Banner” was recognized as the national anthem in 1931, the most common anthem was “Hail Columbia,” which appears next with effective drum rolls in the lowest range of the piano. Then, Gottschalk creates a climactic finale from a quodlibet combining “Hail Columbia” with “Yankee Doodle.”

Having trained in composition, piano, and voice for nine years at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, Samuel Barber first became well known for his orchestral masterpiece *Adagio for Strings* in 1936. Conservatively following Romantic-era forms and tonality with a hint of serialism, Barber developed a unique sound dramatically alternating moments of tension and sublime beauty. Popular piano works include *Excursions*, *Piano Sonata*, and **Nocturne, op. 33**, completed in 1958 and premiered by John Browning. The Nocturne is subtitled “Homage to John Field,” after the Irishman who first composed nocturnes for piano, beginning in 1812.

George Gershwin had gained musical fame and financial reward from three hit musicals and the song “Swanee” before composing his first large-scale composition *Rhapsody in Blue* in 1924. Upon arriving in Paris the next year, he first requested lessons from renowned pedagogue Nadia Boulanger and then from French composer Maurice Ravel who rejected him as a student saying, “why would you want to be a second-rate Ravel, when you are already a first-rate Gershwin.” He returned to New York where he planned to write 24 preludes in a suite called “Melting Pot.” Seven of these preludes were committed to paper and only three were published as a set, often known as **Three Preludes**. Beginning with a 5-note blues motive, the first prelude contains Brazilian dance rhythms, the second portrays a straightforward 12-bar blues in C-sharp minor, and the last “Spanish” prelude features a middle section alluding to ragtime style.

Known for his operetta-style musical *Candide* (1956) and retelling of the Romeo and Juliet story in *West Side Story* (1957), Leonard Bernstein embraced the jazzy American idiom of George Gershwin throughout his compositional career. Known for his sets of piano miniatures which he called “Anniversaries,” Bernstein composed his most substantial mature work for piano solo when commissioned to write **Touches** in 1980 for the sixth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in Fort Worth, Texas. Dedicated “To my first love, the keyboard,” the piece is a bluesy Chorale with Eight Variations and Coda. Highly edited by the composer and featuring

passages to be played either with middle (sostenuto) pedal or no pedal at all, Bernstein explains five reasons for the title in the preface:

- = (French) the keys of the keyboard
- = different “feels” of the fingers, hands and arms: deep, light, percussive, gliding floating, prolonged, caressing...
- = small bits (i.e. “touch of garlic); each variation is a *soupçon*, lasting from 20 to 100 seconds apiece.
- = vignettes of discrete emotions: brief musical manifestations of being “touched” or moved.
- = gestures of love, especially between composer and performer, performer and listener...

A member of *Les Six*, Darius Milhaud was known for composing with jazzy, Brazilian, and polytonal styles; he was also a renowned teacher who counted among his students Americans Dave Brubeck, Philip Glass, and Steve Reich. Before traveling to Harlem in 1922 where he gained inspiration to compose the beloved ballet *La création du monde*, he visited Brazil for 18 months between 1917-1919. The popular song and dance music and tropical environment of Brazil inspired the rhythms and bitonality of his later works, especially in the piano suite ***Saudades do Brasil***, completed after returning to Paris in 1920. “Saudade” reflects a longing, yearning, homesickness, or nostalgia and is evident in all 12 movements which are named for various districts of Rio de Janeiro. Inspired by tango composers like Ernesto Nazareth, Brazilian habanera rhythms are commonplace. Each movement is dedicated to a pianist or friend of the composer, for instance, “Ipanema” is for Arthur Rubinstein and “Tijuca” is for Ricardo Viñes.

From Rio de Janeiro, Ernesto Nazareth was influenced by dance forms including polka, habanera, and *lundu*. A classically-trained pianist, he performed most often at cafes, clubs, and balls. His style of “Brazilian tango” served as the precursor to the *Choro*, a fast and happy improvisatory style later made famous in works by Heitor Villa-Lobos. One of Nazareth’s most popular tangos, following an ABACA Rondo form, is “**Odeon**,” composed in 1910.

Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Alberto Ginastera was first known for his ballets *Panambi* (1936) and *Estancia* (1941). While visiting the United States from 1945-1947, he studied with Aaron Copland at Tanglewood; after returning to his homeland, he completed his fourmovement neoclassical ***Piano Sonata No. 1, op. 22***, which, in 1952, was commissioned by the Carnegie Institute and the Pennsylvania College for Women, and premiered at Carnegie hall by Johana Harris. From his earlier compositional style of “subjective nationalism,” Ginastera sought to capture the sound of Argentine music without relying on quoting folk tunes. The outer movements are earthy and rhythmically complex, whereas the second features a rapid dodecaphonic row treated as an ostinato, and the third movement alternates moods from mysterious, to lamenting, to passionate.