

# Libby Larsen

(B. 1950)

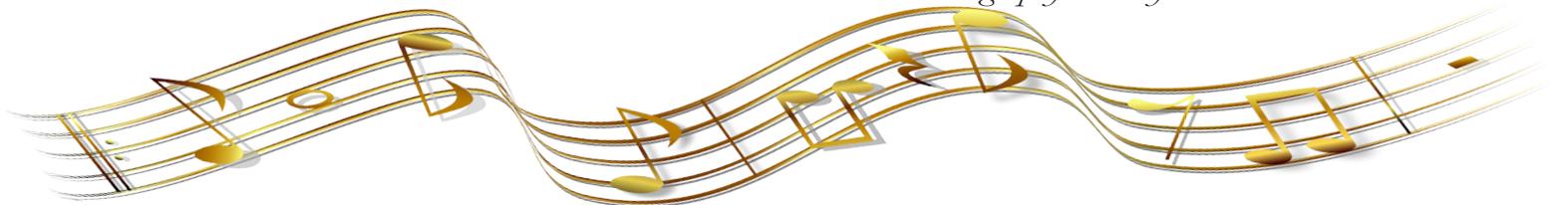
Libby Larsen (b. 24 December 1950, Wilmington, Delaware) is one of America's most performed living composers. She has created a catalogue of over 400 works spanning virtually every genre from intimate vocal and chamber music to massive orchestral works and over twelve operas. Grammy Award winning and widely recorded, including over fifty CD's of her work, she is constantly sought after for commissions and premieres by major artists, ensembles, and orchestras around the world, and has established a permanent place for her works in the concert repertory.



Larsen has been hailed as “the only English-speaking composer since Benjamin Britten who matches great verse with fine music so intelligently and expressively” (USA Today); as “a composer who has made the art of symphonic writing very much her own.” (Gramophone); as “a mistress of orchestration” (Times Union); and for “assembling one of the most impressive bodies of music of our time” (Hartford Courant). Her music has been praised for its “clear textures, easily absorbed rhythms and appealing melodic contours that make singing seem the most natural expression imaginable.” (Philadelphia Inquirer) “Libby Larsen has come up with a way to make contemporary opera both musically current and accessible to the average audience.” (The Wall Street Journal). “Her ability to write memorable new music completely within the confines of traditional harmonic language is most impressive.” (Fanfare)

As a vigorous, articulate advocate for the music and musicians of our time, in 1973 Larsen co-founded the Minnesota Composers Forum, now the American Composer's Forum, which has become an invaluable aid for composers in a transitional time for American arts. A former holder of the Papamarkou Chair at John W. Kluge Center of the Library of Congress, Larsen has also held residencies with the Minnesota Orchestra, the Charlotte Symphony and the Colorado Symphony.

*Biography courtesy artist website*

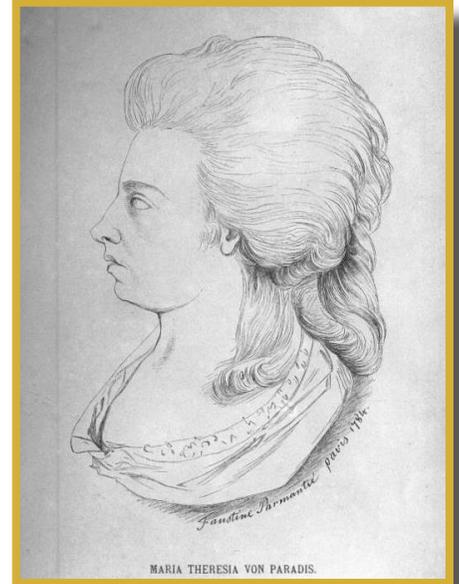


# Maria Theresia von Paradis

(1759-1824)

Maria Theresia von Paradis was a remarkable figure in music history, for not only did she attain significant triumphs as both a composer and performer -- rare enough achievements for a woman living in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe -- but she had to cope with the dreadful handicap of blindness.

Maria Theresia von Paradis was born in Vienna on May 15, 1759. Her father, Joseph Anton von Paradis, was Imperial Secretary of Commerce under Empress Maria Theresia, after whom young Maria was named. When Maria was two she began losing her eyesight, and by the age of five she was blind.



She studied with Antonio Salieri (who composed an organ concerto for her 1773), Leopold Kozeluch, and Karl Frieberth. Treatments by Anton Mesmer in 1776-1777 offered hope her vision might partially be restored, but after 1777 she had to resign herself to a life of total blindness.

By this time she had already established a career as a pianist and singer in Viennese concert halls and salons. Moreover, she had gained respect from the most prominent composers and musicians of the day, including Mozart. By some accounts, his Piano Concerto No. 18 (K. 456) was written for her.

In 1783-1784 she toured Paris, London, and various German cities. In 1785 she helped found, with Valentin Haüy, a school for the blind. Paradis would not turn to composition until the 1780s: the first work that can accurately be attributed to her is the *Zwölf Lieder auf ihrer Reise in Musik*, dating to the years 1784-1786. The process of composition for Paradis was not simple, but she was aided by use of a composition board developed by Johann Riedinger, who served as librettist for several of her stage works, including the 1791 melodrama *Ariadne und Bacchus* and the 1792 *Der Schulkandidat*.

By the late 1780s, Paradis was devoting less time to performance and more to composition. She wrote five operas between 1789 and 1797, as well as numerous other works. Unfortunately, many of her scores have been lost, including two piano concertos and 12 piano sonatas. By 1800 Paradis had begun focusing on teaching, and in 1808 founded a music school for girls in Vienna. For the last decade-and-a-half of her life she taught there and continued to turn out an occasional composition, like the 1811 *Fantasie in C for piano*.

*Biography by Robert Cummings, AllMusic*

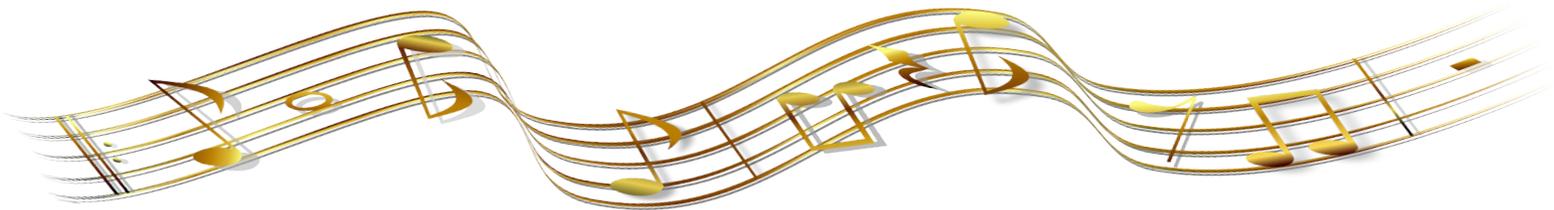
# Cécile Chaminade

(1857-1904)

One of the relatively few women composers of her time to achieve great popularity, Cécile Chaminade was a child prodigy; she began playing the piano very early, and her first compositions date from the age of eight. Her father wouldn't allow her to attend the Paris Conservatoire, but she did work privately with many instructors, including Benjamin Godard, with whom she studied composition. She gave her first public recital at age 18, and from then on appeared frequently as a pianist in France and Belgium, often playing her own music. She was a regular on British concert stages from the early 1890s, and was a guest of Queen Victoria during one of her British tours. Chaminade made her American debut in 1908, playing her Concertstück, Op. 40 (written around 1896) with the Philadelphia Orchestra. She was a big hit in America, and within a few years many Chaminade clubs sprang up around the country. In 1913 she was the first woman to receive the Legion of Honor from the French government. A large percentage of Chaminade's nearly 400 compositions were published during her lifetime. About half of those are short piano pieces, some of which, like *The Scarf Dance* and *The Flatterer*, were once quite popular. She also wrote about 125 songs, as well as a few larger, more ambitious pieces like the ballet *Callirhoë* (1888), the comic opera *La Sevillane*, and the dramatic symphony *Les Amazones*, Op. 26, for chorus and orchestra (1888). She also composed two orchestral suites and a handful of chamber works, including two trios.



*Biography by Chris Morrison, AllMusic*



# Idabelle Firestone

(1874 - 1954)

Idabelle Firestone, née Smith, was born in Minnesota City, Minnesota on November 10, 1874. She was educated at Alma College, Ontario. Her father, George, held the patent to a flour milling process.

In 1895, she married Firestone Tire and Rubber Company founder Harvey S. Firestone (1868-1938). The two were the parents of six children. Idabelle was a musician and composer, and as such contributed several songs to *The Voice of Firestone*, a radio broadcast sponsored throughout its run by the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, and featured active involvement by members of the Firestone family. Her compositions “In My Garden” and “If I Could Tell You” both were featured as theme songs for the program. Many of her other compositions were published, and her work was often recorded, perhaps most notably by the famous mezzo-soprano Risë Stevens.



Idabelle became a member of the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (A.S.C.A.P.) in 1948, and maintained an active interest in music and *The Voice of Firestone* until her death on July 7, 1954.

*Biographical Sources: New England Conservatory and Wikipedia*



# Sharon Ruchman

(B. 1949)

A composer, pianist, and violist, Sharon Ruchman began taking piano lessons at eight years old. In junior high and high school, she studied with Rosetta Goodkind, a teacher at the Juilliard School of Music. She received her Bachelor of Music at New England Conservatory and Master of Music at Yale School of Music in voice.

In 2008, she released her first chamber music CD featuring “Sea Glass.” Subsequently, she completed the following CDs: “Arrival of Spring,” “Remembrance,” “Textures,” “Love and Ceremony,” and “A Bit of Tango.” From 2009 — 2014, Ruchman’s creativity was unleashed. She produced at least one CD each year, including original classical music for solo instrumentation and chamber ensembles. Her music aired on classical radio stations in CT and several radio stations throughout the United States, Canada, and Australia.



In 2015, Ruchman’s great uncle Rudy’s viola finds its way to her. A virtuoso violinist who died tragically at the age of 25 in the early 1930s, Rudolph “Rudy” Fuchs’ story transforms Ruchman’s life personally and professionally, prompting her to write her memoir, *The Gift of Rudy*, published in 2018. Soon afterwards, she follows her passion for tango, composing five original Slow Tango compositions for Tango Berretin Dance Company in Portland, Oregon, who produced five videos showcasing her music with their dancers.

Today, she is studying viola — Rudy’s gift — with Jill Pellett Levine, who plays in the New Haven Symphony and composing original work for SONORO, a musical ensemble which she founded in 2019. At the forefront of contemporary music performance, the group offers a playful and romantic mix of classical, jazz and Latin through a variety of flexible instrumentation to include piano, flute, saxophone, viola, cello and percussion.

*Biography courtesy artist website*

