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***Scottish Fantasy, Op. 46***  
**Finale, *Allegro guerriero* (war-like)**

Max Bruch  
1838-1920

One of the hallmarks of nineteenth-century romanticism in music was the lionizing of the virtuoso violin and piano soloist, influenced by those two great showmen, Niccoló Paganini and Franz Liszt. The result was an insatiable demand for new virtuosic works, and nearly every composer of the period contributed at least one concerto to the repertory.

At the same time, the Romantic composers were attracted to folk songs, as part of the budding nationalist movements and the idealization of the common people. In general, composers' approach to folk music was often casual, as they extracted from the original songs and dances characteristic rhythms and melodic motives, molding and "civilizing" them for sophisticated concert audiences. There was a particularly widespread interest in Scotland, fueled in part by the novels of Sir Walter Scott with their description of wild landscapes and quasi savagery on the outskirts of civilized Europe. They also came under the influence of the poems of Ossian, believed at the time to have been an ancient Scottish bard who actually turned out to be a hoax perpetrated by Scottish writer James MacPherson (1736-1796).

Bruch was a German composer, conductor and music teacher, one of the lesser figures of German late Romanticism, who spent most of his career moving within Germany from one minor post to another. Only in 1891 were his talents finally recognized when he became professor of composition at the prestigious Berlin Conservatory.

Bruch composed the *Scottish Fantasy* in 1879-80, crediting his inspiration to the novels of Scott. Although Bruch inserted the disclaimer "free use" into the actual title: *Fantasia for the Violin, with Orchestra and Harp, with the Free Use of Scottish Folk-Melodies*, Highlanders were still incensed at the "insensitive" way he treated their beloved songs, rendering them nearly unrecognizable. It had to be pointed out to them that he had merely used the melodies as a starting point to create a virtuoso showpiece. To make the work truly international, he dedicated it to the Spanish violinist Pablo Sarasate.

The spectacularly acrobatic Finale is based on the ballad "Scots Wha Hae wi' Wallace Bled," – the same melody Hector Berlioz had used in his Overture to *Rob Roy* – plus a couple of contrasting melodies, all subject to elaborate variations by the violin. According to legend, the text on which this song is based was proclaimed by Robert the Bruce at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314 – as "modified" by the Scottish poet Robert Burns. No ersatz Scottish music would have been complete without capitalizing on the so-called "Scotch snap," the rhythmic "short-long" figure in which the accent is placed on the short part of the metric foot.