Fritz Kreisler, *Liebesleid*

“They wrote me from home that the wife of our family physician, Dr. Kreisler, is in Paris; I should have called on her long ago. . . . The unfortunate woman has a ten-year-old son who, after two years in the Vienna Conservatorium, won the great prize there and is said to be highly gifted. . . . The prodigy is pale, plain, but looks pretty intelligent.” So wrote Sigmund Freud to his fiancée in the fall of 1885. Given his mixed assessment of “the prodigy,” Dr. Freud was certainly unaware that young Fritz Kreisler would grow up to be one of the world’s greatest violin performers. However, despite his prodigious beginnings, the start of Kreisler’s professional career was not smooth. At one point he gave up the violin in order to study medicine, and after he returned to playing professionally, he failed to win a place in the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra (allegedly due to a lack of sight-reading ability). Additionally, Vienna beset Kreisler with temptations—he drank, gambled, and had multiple affairs. However, after marrying the American divorcée Harriet Lies Worz, Kreisler’s career moved steadily upward. Harriet was much more blunt and organized than her docile husband, and her influence led him to a stable performing life. One can hope that *Liebesleid* (“Love’s Sorrow”) was not inspired by their relationship.

Although Kreisler was renowned for his skill as a concert violinist (his ever-present vibrato and warm tone were particularly lauded), he also enjoyed composition. He often wrote salon pieces that he performed himself, including *Liebesleid* and its companion piece, *Liebesfreud* (“Love’s Joy”). However, as part of a hoax he frequently attempted with his compositions, Kreisler initially claimed that they were written by someone else—in this case, Joseph Lanner, a contemporary of Johann Strauss I. As the story goes, Kreisler finally “outed” *Liebesleid* and *Liebesfreud* as his own works when a Viennese critic accused him of arrogance for programming “these gems of Lanner” alongside an original composition. Given that both pieces have steadily remained in the violin repertoire, Kreisler could certainly be proud to call them his.

Despite its melancholy title, *Liebesleid* is not a depressing piece—one example of this is its tempo marking, “Tempo di Ländler” (a ländler is a folkdance in 3/4 time). The beginning section of the piece, which can be designated “A,” is in the minor mode—however, the brisk tempo makes the piece sound more nostalgic than sorrowful. The second section of *Liebesleid*, “B,” is slightly slower and in the major mode. The sweetness of “B” does not detract from the piece’s nostalgic quality, instead functioning like a pleasant memory or dream. “A” soon returns, again followed by “B,” both with slight alterations for variety. After a long trill, *Liebesleid* ends on a brief eighth note, perhaps representing love floating gently—but rapidly—away.

Edouard Lalo, *Symphonie espagnole*, Op. 21

Edouard Lalo can well be considered an inspiration for those who rebel against their parents’ wishes by pursuing musical careers. Although Lalo’s parents first encouraged their son’s fondness for music (he attended the Lille Conservatoire as a youth, playing both violin and cello), they were dismayed upon learning that he wanted to earn his living as a musician. Lalo’s father was a military hero who had been decorated