Jean Émile Paul Cras was born May 22, 1879 in Brest, France. He was a 20th century French composer and also a naval officer. During World War I, Cras served in the Adriatic Campaign. Cras’ highest appointed positions before his death in 1932 were Major General of the Port of Brest and Rear Admiral. Cras considered chamber music to be his specialty. His compositions were inspired by his travels to Africa and his sea voyages.

In his collection of chamber music, Cras wrote six piano trios out of his fourteen chamber music compositions. A piano trio is a group of piano and two other instruments; typically, a piano trio will feature violin and cello. The genre first began with composers Haydn and Beethoven in the late 1700’s. During the Classical period, piano trios were typically written in sonata form (they had three movements). After music began to develop over time, piano trios did just the same. Some composers began experimenting with the form and wrote only two movements and others wrote more than three movements. Composers also began exploring different instrumentation such as piano with cello and flute and even piano with bassoon, and clarinet. The piano trio we will be performing was composed by Cras in 1907. This work has four movements. We will be performing the second movement.