

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra  
2016-2017 Mellon Grand Classics Season

February 3 and 5, 2017

MANFRED MARIA HONECK, CONDUCTOR  
MIDORI, VIOLIN

WOLFGANG AMADEUS  
MOZART

Symphony No. 35 in D major, K. 385, "Haffner"

- I. Allegro con spirito
- II. Andante
- III. Menuetto
- IV. Presto

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

Concerto in E minor for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 64

- I. Allegro molto appassionata
- II. Andante
- III. Allegretto non troppo — Allegro molto vivace

**Midori**

Intermission

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Opus 68

- I. Un poco sostenuto — Allegro
- II. Andante sostenuto
- III. Un poco allegretto e grazioso
- IV. Adagio — Allegro non troppo, ma con brio

## PROGRAM NOTES BY DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

### WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

#### Symphony No. 35 in D major, K. 385, "Haffner" (1782)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg on January 27, 1756 and died in Vienna on December 5, 1791. Mozart composed his Symphony No. 35, also known as the "Haffner" Symphony after patron Burgomaster Haffner in 1782, and it was premiered in Vienna on March 23, 1783 with the composer conducting. The Pittsburgh Symphony gave its first performance of the "Haffner" Symphony on November 4, 1937 at Syria Mosque under the direction of Otto Klemperer, and most recently performed it under the direction of Michael Stern on May 13, 2001. The score calls for pairs of woodwinds, horns and trumpets, timpani and strings. **Performance time: approximately 20 minutes.**

By the summer of 1782, Mozart had been living in Vienna for a full year and was making some headway in his career and his personal life. Though he had more than a drop of the roustabout in his blood, he was preparing to undertake a marriage in August with Constanze Weber, his second choice after Constanze's sister, Aloysia, became unavailable. His music was becoming known, and a steady stream of commissions was coming his way. Through his concerts, for which he wrote his own concertos, he was gaining a sound reputation as a splendid pianist. In July, he was finishing *The Abduction from the Seraglio* and getting the production on the boards, as well as working on the C minor Serenade (K. 388). At the end of the month, an urgent letter arrived from his father, Leopold, in Salzburg, which told Wolfgang that the Salzburg Burgomaster [mayor] Siegmund Haffner was being elevated to the nobility, and would not think of celebrating such an important occasion without a grand party highlighted by a new composition from that distinguished son of Salzburg, the young Mozart off seeking his fortune in Vienna. The Burgomaster knew what he was ordering — Mozart had provided the splendid "Haffner" Serenade (K. 250) for the wedding of Siegmund's daughter, Elizabeth, in 1776. Mozart was reluctant to accept the proposal because of his crowded schedule, but he realized that a request from such an important person was not to be taken lightly, so he agreed. Over the next two weeks, the six movements of the commissioned work — another serenade — were sent to Salzburg. The last movement to be completed was an introductory march that was posted on August 1st, only three days before his marriage to Constanze. Despite the haste with which he wrote the piece, Mozart was determined to provide Burgomaster Haffner with his best work. "I just will not smear down any old notes on the paper," he vowed. Mozart, it seemed, was constitutionally incapable of writing bad music.

Early the following year, Mozart was organizing a concert and needed a new symphony for the program. He remembered the second Serenade he had composed for Burgomaster Haffner, and wrote to his father asking him to send a copy of the work. The piece had been written so quickly the preceding summer that, on seeing the score again, Mozart wrote, "It was a complete surprise to me. I had completely forgotten what it was like — this should really make a good effect." The opening march (K. 408, No. 2) and a second minuet (perhaps K. 409) were not needed and were jettisoned to produce the four-movement "Haffner" Symphony, which has always borne the name of its patron. To enhance the work's "good effect" Mozart added flutes and clarinets to the scoring. It all worked splendidly, and the Symphony was a great success at the concert on March 23, 1783. The Emperor himself attended, and Mozart proudly noted the monarch's "loud applause" and "boundless enthusiasm" for the music.

The majestic opening movement owes as much to Handel as to Haydn, and is excellently suited to the grand occasion for which it was conceived. The exposition contains only a single theme rather than the contrasting melodies usually found in similar movements, and most commentators attribute this technique to Haydn's influence, though his treatment of his motivic material is considerably different from that of Mozart. Saint-Foix, in his study of Mozart's symphonies, led in the right direction when he wrote of the movement's "archaic style spiced with harmonic tang," because it is the ceremonial music of Handel (*Water Music, Royal Fireworks Music*) that is here the dominant influence. Mozart was introduced to the music of Handel and Bach by Baron Gottfried van Swieten, the Habsburg Court librarian, and the composer was deeply influenced by those Baroque masters. Not only did he study their scores, but he

also re-orchestrated some of their works (including *Messiah*) and conducted numerous performances of their vocal and instrumental music. The legacy he inherited from Bach and Handel is evident in the contrapuntal ingenuity and singularity of mood of this movement.

The intimate second movement, a delicate sonatina (sonata-allegro without development section) in Mozart's most elegant style, presents a charming contrast to the extroverted bustle of the first movement. The following *Menuetto* treads a stately strain, with a trio that bears some resemblance to an air from Mozart's opera *La finta giardiniera*, composed for the Munich carnival season of 1775. The finale, which Mozart instructed should go "as fast as possible," begins with a vigorous theme that recalls Osmin's aria "Ha! Wie will ich triumphieren" ("Ah! I shall be triumphant") from *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, an opera that was mounted just at the time that this Symphony was composed. The feelings expressed by Osmin — that he had every intention of succeeding — may have been the independent-minded young composer's subtle message to the Salzburg that he had recently escaped. The form of the finale is a rollicking sonata-rondo (the influence of Haydn is apparent here) whose music makes understandable the enthusiastic response of Emperor Joseph at the premiere of this marvelous Symphony.

## FELIX MENDELSSOHN

### Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in E minor, Opus 64 (1844)

Felix Mendelssohn was born in Hamburg on February 3, 1809 and died in Leipzig on November 4, 1847. He composed the Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in 1844, after announcing his intentions to do so some six years earlier, and it received its premiere in Leipzig on March 13, 1845 with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Niels Gade conducting, and Ferdinand David as soloist. The Pittsburgh Symphony gave its first performance in Carnegie Music Hall on April 2, 1896 with Frederic Archer conducting and Achille Rivarde as soloist. The concerto was most recently performed with Juraj Valcuha conducting and Stefan Jackiw as soloist on April 6, 2014. The score calls for woodwinds, horns and trumpets in pairs, timpani and strings. **Performance time: approximately 28 minutes.**

"I would like to compose a violin concerto for next winter," Mendelssohn wrote in July 1838 to his friend, violinist Ferdinand David. "One in E minor keeps running through my head, and the opening gives me no peace." It was for David that Mendelssohn planned and wrote his only mature Violin Concerto. Their friendship began when the two first met at about the age of fifteen while the young violinist was on a concert tour through Germany. They were delighted to discover the coincidence that David had been born only eleven months after Mendelssohn in the same neighborhood in Hamburg. Already well formed even in those early years, David's playing was said to have combined the serious, classical restraint of Ludwig Spohr, his teacher, the elegance of the French tradition, and the technical brilliance of Paganini. Mendelssohn, who admired both the man and his playing, saw to it that David was appointed concertmaster of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra when he became that organization's music director in 1835. They remained close friends and musical allies. When Mendelssohn's health was feeble, David looked after much of the routine activity of the Gewandhaus, where he spent 37 years, and he even stepped in to conduct the premiere of Mendelssohn's oratorio *St. Paul* when the composer was stricken during a measles epidemic in 1836.

Despite his good intentions and the gentle prodding of David to complete his Violin Concerto, Mendelssohn did not get around to serious work on the score until 1844. He had been busy with other composition and conducting projects, including a particularly troublesome one as director of the Academy of Arts in Berlin. The requirements of that position — which included composing the incidental music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* — took much of his time, and it was not until he resigned from the post in 1844 that he was able to complete the Violin Concerto.

The Concerto opens with a soaring violin melody whose lyricism exhibits a grand passion tinged with restless, Romantic melancholy. Some glistening passagework for the violinist leads through a transition melody to the second theme, a quiet, sunny strain shared by woodwinds and soloist. More glistening

arabesques from the violinist and a quickened rhythm close the exposition. The succinct development section is largely based on the opening theme. In this Concerto, Mendelssohn moved the cadenza forward from its traditional place as an appendage near the end of the first movement to become an integral component of the structure, here separating the development from the recapitulation. It leads seamlessly into the restatement of the movement's thematic material.

The thread of a single note sustained by the bassoon carries the Concerto to the *Andante*, a song rich in warm sentiment and endearing elegance. This slow movement's center section is distinguished by its rustling accompaniment and bittersweet minor-mode melody. A dozen measures of chordal writing for strings link this movement with the finale, an effervescent sonata form that trips along with the distinctive aerial grace of which Mendelssohn was an undisputed master.

## JOHANNES BRAHMS

### Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Opus 68 (1855-1876)

Johannes Brahms was born in Hamburg on May 7, 1833 and died in Vienna on April 3, 1897. He composed his First Symphony over a 20 year period from 1855 to 1876, eventually devoting two years to it beginning in the summer of 1874. The first performance was given in Karlsruhe by the Orchestra of the Grand Duke of Baden on November 4, 1876 with Felix Otto Dessoff conducting. The Pittsburgh Symphony gave its first performance of the symphony in Carnegie Music Hall on November 9, 1900 under the direction of Victor Herbert, and it was most recently performed on March 29, 2015 with Andrés Orozco-Estrada conducting. The score calls for pairs of woodwinds, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani and strings. **Performance time: approximately 47 minutes.**

Brahms, while not as breathtakingly precocious as Mozart, Mendelssohn or Schubert, got a reasonably early start on his musical career: he had produced several piano works (including two large sonatas) and a goodly number of songs by the age of nineteen. In 1853, when Brahms was only twenty, Robert Schumann wrote an article for the widely distributed *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* ("New Journal for Music"), his first contribution to that influential publication in a decade, hailing Brahms as the savior of German music, the rightful heir to the mantle of Beethoven. Brahms was extremely proud of Schumann's advocacy and he displayed the journal with great joy to his friends and family when he returned to his humble Hamburg neighborhood after visiting Schumann in Düsseldorf, but there was the other side of Schumann's assessment as well, that which placed an immense burden on Brahms' shoulders.

Brahms was acutely aware of the deeply rooted traditions of German music extending back not just to Beethoven, but even beyond him to Bach and Schütz and Lassus. His knowledge of Bach was so thorough, for example, that he was asked to join the editorial board of the first complete edition of the works of that Baroque master. He knew that, having been heralded by Schumann, his compositions, especially a symphony, would have to measure up to the standards set by his forebears. At first he doubted that he was even able to write a symphony, feeling that Beethoven had nearly expended all the potential of that form, leaving nothing for future generations. "You have no idea," Brahms lamented, "how it feels to hear behind you the tramp of a giant like Beethoven."

Encouraged by Schumann to undertake a symphony ("If one only makes the beginning, then the end comes of itself," he cajoled), Brahms made some attempts in 1854, but was unsatisfied with the symphonic potential of the sketches, and diverted them into the First Piano Concerto and the *German Requiem*. He began again a year later, perhaps influenced by a performance of Schumann's *Manfred*, and set down a first movement, but this music he kept to himself, and even his closest friends knew of no more than the existence of the manuscript. Seven years passed before he sent this movement to Clara, Schumann's widow, to seek her opinion. With only a few reservations, she was pleased with this C minor sketch, and encouraged Brahms to hurry on and finish the rest so that it could be performed. Brahms, however, was not to be rushed. Eager inquiries from conductors in 1863, 1864 and 1866 went unanswered. It was not until 1870 that he hinted about any progress at all beyond the first movement.

The success of the superb *Haydn Variations* for orchestra of 1873 seemed to convince Brahms that he could complete his initial symphony, and in the summer of 1874 he began two years of labor — revising, correcting, perfecting — before he signed and dated the score of the First Symphony in September 1876. It is a serious and important essay (“Composing a symphony is no laughing matter,” according to Brahms), one that revitalized the symphonic sonata form of Beethoven and combined it with the full contrapuntal resources of Bach, a worthy successor to the traditions Brahms revered. In the century since its premiere, it has become the most performed of Brahms’ symphonies and one of the most cherished pieces in the orchestral literature.

The first movement begins with a slow introduction energized by the heartbeat of the timpani. The violins announce the upward-bounding main theme in the faster tempo that launches a magnificent, seamless sonata form. The second movement starts with a placid, melancholy song led by the violins. After a mildly syncopated middle section, the bittersweet melody returns. The brief third movement, with its prevailing woodwind colors, is reminiscent of the pastoral serenity of Brahms’ halcyon earlier Serenades. The finale begins with an extended slow introduction based on several pregnant thematic ideas, and concludes with a noble chorale intoned by trombones and bassoons. The finale proper begins with a new tempo and a broad hymnal theme, and progresses in sonata form, but without a development section. The work closes with a majestic coda in the brilliant key of C major featuring the trombone chorale of the introduction in its full splendor.