

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
2016-2017 Mellon Grand Classics Season

April 23, 2017

MANFRED MARIA HONECK, CONDUCTOR
TILL FELLNER, PIANO

FRANZ SCHUBERT Selections from the Incidental Music
to *Rosamunde*, D. 644
I. Overture
II. Ballet Music No. 2

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN Concerto No. 3 for Piano and Orchestra
in C minor, Opus 37
I. Allegro con brio
II. Largo
III. Rondo: Allegro
 Mr. Fellner

Intermission

WOLFGANG AMADEUS Symphony No. 41 in C major, K. 551, "Jupiter"
MOZART
I. Allegro vivace
II. Andante cantabile
III. Allegretto
IV. Molto allegro

PROGRAM NOTES BY DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

FRANZ SCHUBERT

Overture and Ballet Music No. 2 from the Incidental Music to *Rosamunde*, D. 644 (1820 and 1823)

Franz Schubert was born in Vienna on January 31, 1797, and died there on November 19, 1828. He composed the music for *Rosamunde* during the years 1820 and 1823. The ballet was premiered in Vienna on December 20, 1823 at the Theater-an-der-Wein, with the composer conducting. The Incidental Music to *Rosamunde* was first performed by the Pittsburgh Symphony on November 9, 1906, conducted by Emil Paur at Carnegie Music Hall. Most recently, Lorin Maazel conducted the Overture to *Rosamunde* on March 14, 1986. The score calls for pairs of woodwinds, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani and strings. **Performance time: approximately 17 minutes**

Schubert wrote more for the stage than is commonly realized. His output contains over a dozen works for the theater, including eight complete operas and operettas. Every one flopped. Still, he doggedly followed each new theatrical opportunity that came his way. With stars in his eyes, he jumped at the chance when he was asked by the administrators of Vienna's Theater-an-der-Wien in 1823 to provide incidental music to a new fantasy play: *Rosamunde, Fürstin von Cypern* ("*Rosamunde, Princess of Cyprus*") by Wilhelmine von Chezy. Wilhelmine was already infamous as the perpetrator of the libretto for Weber's opera *Euryanthe*, a book that the esteemed English musicologist Sir Donald Tovey described as "an unholy mess." In addition to her questionable literary talents, she had also established a distinctive personal reputation. Eduard von Bauernfeld, one of Schubert's friends, wrote that she was "extremely good-natured, a little ridiculous and not particularly distinguished for her cleanliness."

In his biography of Schubert, Maurice J.E. Brown described Chezy's *Rosamunde*: "The actual play is lost, but a very full summary of the plot survives from contemporary records. There are some strange flowers in the rotting undergrowth of the 'Romantic' jungle-world, but nothing stranger than this play, with its secret passages, princesses brought up by fisher-folk, poisoned letters, shepherd princes and the rest." It is little wonder that the production was scrapped after only two performances. There was some acclaim for Schubert's contribution ("What a pity that Schubert's wonderfully beautiful music has not found a worthier subject!" moaned the reviewer of the *Conversationsblatt*), but it, too, dropped from sight as soon as the play closed.

The history of the *Rosamunde* music is tortuous. Schubert did not have time to write an Overture for the premiere, so he borrowed the one from his *Die Zauberharfe* ("*The Magic Harp*"), a fantasy-melodrama of 1820 inspired by the success of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. (Some reports claim he used the Overture to his opera *Alfonso und Estrella* for the premiere.) The *Zauberharfe* Overture was published with the incidental music in a piano arrangement shortly before the composer's death, and has been associated with *Rosamunde* ever since. The existence of the complete incidental music was, therefore, never in doubt, but the original orchestrations disappeared immediately after the premiere. In 1867, two intrepid Englishmen — George Grove of music dictionary fame and Arthur Sullivan of operetta fame — mounted an expedition to Vienna to uncover Schubertiana. Their trip was a triumph. Besides many previously unknown songs, they discovered the manuscripts of the Symphonies Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 and, after much rummaging in forgotten closets and dusty cupboards, the original orchestral parts for *Rosamunde* as well. Grove reported without a blush that they played a game of leap-frog around the room to celebrate. The *Rosamunde* music was introduced to England shortly thereafter, and it has been among Schubert's most familiar works ever since.

Schubert's Overture to *Rosamunde* (and to *Die Zauberharfe*) was warmly received at its 1823 performance — the audience demanded an immediate encore. Brimming with the buoyancy and *joie-de-vivre* that mark his best music, it is a reminder that every piece written by Schubert, who died in 1828 at the age of just 31, was a youthful work. The composition is disposed in the sonatina form (i.e., sonata-allegro without a development section) employed by Mozart for several of his opera overtures. After a slow introduction containing a theme of ineffable, limpid grace, there follows an exposition with three further Schubertian melodic inspirations. Following a tiny passage at the Overture's mid-point for the

reason of modulation, the trio of themes is heard again, and the work is rounded off with a jolly, vigorous coda.

The Ballet Music No. 2 uses a jaunty country dance tune in its opening and closing sections to surround several contrasting episodes in the middle of the movement. This movement's principal melody was borrowed by Heinrich Berté and Sigmund Romberg for inclusion in *Blossom Time*, their popular operetta based on the melodies of Schubert.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Concerto No. 3 for Piano and Orchestra in C minor, Opus 37 (1797-1803)

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in Bonn on December 16, 1770, and died in Vienna on March 26, 1827. He composed his Third Piano Concerto (one of five concertos for the instrument) between 1797 and 1803. The concerto was premiered in Vienna on April 4, 1803, with Ignaz von Seyfried conducting and Beethoven as soloist. The Pittsburgh Symphony premiered the concerto at Syria Mosque on October 25, 1946, with Fritz Reiner conducting and Claudio Arrau as soloist. The concerto was last heard in Heinz Hall on April 17, 2010, with Juraj Valcuha conducting and Yefim Bronfman as soloist. The score calls for woodwinds, horns and trumpets in pairs, timpani and strings.

Performance time: approximately 34 minutes

By 1803, Emanuel Schickaneder, the colorful character who figured so prominently in the closing pages of Mozart's life as the librettist and producer of *The Magic Flute*, had taken over the management of Vienna's Theater-an-der-Wien. His house was locked in a fierce competition with the court-subsidized Kärntnertheater, run by Baron Peter von Braun. When von Braun hired the distinguished Luigi Cherubini as resident composer, Schickaneder felt obliged to counter with his own music master, and he approached Beethoven with an offer. Beethoven, who had felt the need to write for the stage for some time, accepted gladly — especially since the job carried free lodgings in the theater as part of the compensation. He and Schickaneder dutifully plowed through a small library of possibilities for an operatic subject, but none inspired Beethoven until he took up work on *Fidelio* late in 1803.

In the meantime, Beethoven took advantage of his theatrical connection to put some of his instrumental works on display. Since opera was forbidden in Catholic countries during Lent at that time, the Theater-an-der-Wien was available for concerts in the early spring, and Beethoven scheduled such an event during April 1803. It had been fully three years since he last presented a concert entirely of his own music, and he had several scores that were awaiting their first presentations, including the Second Symphony, the oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives* and this Third Piano Concerto. He programmed all of these, and, for good measure, tossed in the First Symphony, which had first been heard at his concert three years earlier.

Beethoven proceeded enthusiastically with plans for the concert, working right up to the last minute putting finishing touches on the new compositions. (His pupil Ferdinand Ries found him in bed writing trombone parts for the oratorio only three hours before the rehearsal began.) He had only a single rehearsal on the concert day for this wealth of unfamiliar music, and, with his less-than-adept players, it is little wonder that it went poorly. The public and critical response to the concert was lukewarm, undoubtedly due in large part to the inadequate performance. Beethoven, however, was delighted to have played his music for the Viennese public, and he was well on his way to becoming recognized more for his ability as a composer than as a pianist.

The Third Concerto's first movement opens with the longest introductory orchestral *tutti* in Beethoven's concertos, virtually a full symphonic exposition in itself. The strings in unison present immediately the main theme, "a group of pregnant figures," assessed the eminent British musicologist Sir Donald Tovey, "which nobody but Beethoven could have invented." The lyrical second theme is sung by violins and clarinet in a contrasting major mode. The closely reasoned development section grows inexorably from thematic fragments heard in the exposition. The recapitulation begins with a forceful restatement of the main theme by the full orchestra. The second theme and other melodic materials follow, always given a heightened emotional weight over their initial appearances, and lead to a cadenza written by Beethoven that takes on the character of a development section for the soloist. The orchestra re-enters, at first accompanied by quiet, ethereal chords in the piano but soon rising to a stern climax that draws the movement to a close.

The second movement is a nocturne of tender sentiments and quiet moods. Though analysis reveals its form to be a three-part structure (A–B–A), it is in spirit simply an extended song — a marvelous juxtaposition of hymnal tranquility and sensuous operatic love scene.

The traditional, Classical rondo was a form of simple, high spirits meant to send the audience away in a bubbling mood. Mozart, in his incomparable late concertos, had begun to explore the emotional depth possible with the rondo, and in this Third Concerto Beethoven continued that search. (Mozart's Concerto No. 24 in C minor, K. 491 was an important model for Beethoven's work.) Beethoven incorporated elements of sonata design into the finale to lend it additional weight, even inserting a fugal passage in the second episode. Only in the closing pages is the dark world of C minor abandoned for a vivacious romp through C major to close this wonderful work.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Symphony No. 41 in C major, K. 551, "Jupiter" (1788)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg on January 27, 1756, and died in Vienna on December 5, 1791. He composed his Symphony No. 41 during a two month period of productivity in 1788 that also produced his Symphonies Nos. 39 & 40. The premiere of "Jupiter" is unknown, and it was possibly not performed during Mozart's lifetime. The Pittsburgh Symphony premiered "Jupiter" at Carnegie Music Hall on January 14, 1897, conducted by Frederic Archer. Most recently, the Pittsburgh Symphony performed the work on April 27, 2014, with music director Manfred Honeck. The score calls for flute, pairs of oboes, bassoons, horns and trumpets, timpani and strings.

Performance time: 37 minutes.

Mozart's life was starting to come apart in 1788 — his money, health, family situation and professional status were all on the decline. He was a poor money manager, and the last years of his life saw him sliding progressively deeper into debt. One of his most generous creditors was Michael Puchberg, a brother Mason, to whom he wrote a letter which included the following pitiable statement: "If you, worthy brother, do not help me in this predicament, I shall lose my honor and my credit, which I so wish to preserve."

Sources of income dried up. His students had dwindled to only two by summer, and he had to sell his new compositions for a pittance to pay the most immediate bills. He hoped that Vienna would receive *Don Giovanni* as well as had Prague when that opera was premiered there the preceding year, but it was met with a haughty indifference when first heard in the Austrian capital in May 1788. He could no longer draw enough subscribers to produce his own concerts, and had to take second billing on the programs of other musicians. His wife, Constanze, was ill from worry and continuous pregnancy, and spent much time away from her husband taking cures at various mineral spas. On June 29th, their fourth child and only daughter, Theresia, age six months, died.

Yet, astonishingly, from these seemingly debilitating circumstances came one of the greatest miracles in the history of music. In the summer of 1788, in the space of only six weeks, Mozart composed the three greatest symphonies of his life: No. 39, in E-flat (K. 543) was finished on June 26th; the G minor (No. 40, K. 550) on July 25th; and the C major, "Jupiter" (No. 41, K. 551) on August 10th.

The "Jupiter" Symphony stands at the pinnacle of 18th-century orchestral art. It is grand in scope, impeccable in form and rich in substance. Mozart, always fecund as a melodist, was absolutely profligate with themes in this Symphony. Three separate motives are successively introduced in the first dozen measures: a brilliant rushing gesture, a sweetly lyrical thought from the strings, and a marching motive played by the winds. The second theme is a simple melody first sung by the violins over a rocking accompaniment. The closing section of the exposition (begun immediately after a falling figure in the violins and a silence) introduces a jolly little tune that Mozart had originally written a few weeks earlier as a buffa aria for bass voice to be interpolated into *Le Gelosie Fortunate* ("The Fortunate Jealousy"), an opera by Pasquale Anfossi. Much of the development is devoted to an amazing exploration of the musical possibilities of this simple ditty. The thematic material is heard again in the recapitulation, but, as so often with Mozart, in a richer orchestral and harmonic setting.

The ravishing *Andante* is spread across a fully realized sonata form, with a compact but emotionally charged development section. The third movement (*Minuet*) is a perfect blend of the lighthearted rhythms of popular Viennese dances and Mozart's deeply expressive chromatic harmony.

The finale of this Symphony has been the focus of many a musicological assault. It is demonstrable that there are as many as five different themes played simultaneously at certain places in the movement, making this one of the most masterful displays of technical accomplishment in the entire orchestral repertory. But the listener need not be subjected to any numbing pedantry to realize that this music is really something special. Mozart was the greatest genius in the history of music, and he never surpassed this movement.

©2017 Dr. Richard E. Rodda