

Program Notes

By April L. Racana

Sunday, July 12 The 866th Orchard Hall Subscription Concert

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) "Die Entführung aus dem Serail" Overture, K. 384

Austrian born, Mozart is considered to be one of the most versatile composers of all time, especially considering his relatively short life span. Touring Europe widely as a child, he gave performances on piano, harpsichord and organ, and began to compose both instrumental and vocal music from a very young age. His exposure to a wide variety of music in large musical centers including Austria's capital of Vienna; Munich and Mannheim in Germany; Paris, France; London, England; and throughout much of Italy, can be seen to have influenced his writings a great deal.

Mozart's move from Salzburg to Vienna in 1781 precipitated an outpouring of compositions, not only to establish himself professionally as a composer and pianist, but also for financial support. The first opera he would compose there was "The Abduction from the Seraglio", and was composed with the idea of impressing not only the Emperor Joseph II, but also the Viennese court and public audiences as well. It was composed in a *singspiel* style using a German text that included spoken dialogue between the arias.

The libretto was written by Gottlieb Stephanie who was a playwright and stage director at Vienna's German Opera. The story is based on the play "Belmonte and Kostanze" written by Christophe Friedrich Bretzner and presents the adventures of the two lovers who had been shipwrecked in Turkey and were being held prisoner by the nobleman, Pasha Selim. Following a series of crazy adventures the nobleman eventually sets them free.

Apparently Turkish exotic music was in vogue at the time in Vienna and Mozart took full advantage of the fact, incorporating timpani, bass drum, triangles and cymbals, as well as having piccolo double the flute part, to create the lively atmosphere for the scene set in a Turkish harem. The Overture is in C-major and opens with the bright Turkish-styled theme. The slower middle section shifts to a minor key and acts as a preview to the opening aria of the opera where the hero Belmonte is longing for his lover who has been captured and with whom he hopes to be reunited. The opening Turkish-styled theme returns to close the Overture.

The opera was composed between 1781-1782 and premiered in July of 1782. It was a great success, however the Emperor, Joseph II commented that it was "too fine for our ears, and an immense number of notes..." To which Mozart replied "just as many notes, your majesty, as are required." In spite of the hesitations of the emperor, the work seemed to have done its job of establishing the composer's reputation among the Viennese public as well as throughout Europe where it was performed as well. Mozart commented on the inclusion of the strong percussive elements which were meant to imitate the Turkish Janissary musical style, when he stated in a letter to his father: "I don't believe anyone will doze through it, even if they've missed an entire night's sleep."

Instrumentation: 1 flute(doubling on piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, triangle, cymbal, bass drum, strings

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra in E-flat major, K. 365 (316a)

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante
- III. Rondo - Allegro

Nearing the end of the European Tour that had taken him to Mannheim and Munich, Mozart arrived in Paris in the spring of 1778 where he continued to look for additional work opportunities. It was during this time that *sinfonia concertante* had come to the fore in these cities, where a work would feature two or more solo instruments with the orchestra. So it was not surprising that Mozart would attempt to compose a number of works in this genre using a variety of instruments. Although some of these would not come to be published or performed, two double-concerti were completed upon his return to Salzburg. These included the Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola in E-flat (K. 364), as well as the work being performed for this concert series, the Concerto for Two Pianos (also in E-flat).

Although it is not known exactly when this Double Concerto was composed, it is believed the bulk of the work was completed early in 1779, with some sketches probably coming in the few years prior to that. Having already tried his hand at solo piano concertos prior to this time, many of these earlier concertos were primarily considered to be transcriptions or arrangements of works by such composers as C.P.E. Bach and J.C. Bach, among others. However, at the age of twenty-one, in 1777, Mozart composed his ninth piano concerto, which may have been his first wholly original of the genre.

It is thought that the Concerto for Two

Pianos was composed with his sister, Nannerl in mind, especially since they had toured together all over Europe in their younger days. And although their childhood performances had long passed, they apparently continued performing together, sometimes presenting piano sonatas for piano four-hands. So it was, that the last concerto Mozart would compose in Salzburg is believed to have been this Double Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra, and most likely performed by he and his sister at one of final concerts there in 1780.

Presented in three movements, the two soloist parts were composed for equal partners, so that both soloists have similar challenges throughout. The first movement (*Allegro*) opens with the main theme in an extensive orchestral introduction, which is then taken up by the two soloists and expanded. A second theme offers a contrasting dramatic effect before the orchestra returns to the opening theme. A double cadenza closes the movement.

The second movement (*Andante*) presents melodies that some scholars have compared to the composer's operatic arias, with beautiful interplay between the soloists and featuring the oboes, with the full orchestra staying in the background for the most part. The final movement (*Rondeau: Allegro*) alternates the rondo theme with each soloist featured in turn. Throughout one can hear the two soloists either echoing each other, or answering one another's call. At times Mozart may have one soloist present one theme with the second soloist presenting a slight variation. During some interchanges, the first soloist will open a phrase with the

second soloist completing their thought, just as two siblings may have completed each others' sentences.

In its original score, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns and strings were indicated. However, it is believed that Mozart added two clarinets, two trumpets and timpani to the first and last

movements for some private performances in Vienna in 1781, where he performed this work with one of his students (who was also as his patron), Josepha Barbara von Auernhammer.

Instrumentation: 2 solo pianos (Klavier), 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, strings

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) Symphony No. 6 in B minor "Pathétique" op. 74

- I. Adagio-Allegro non troppo
- II. Allegro con grazia
- III. Allegro molto vivace
- IV. Finale. Adagio lamentoso

The Sixth Symphony ultimately came to be described as one of a trilogy, linked inexorably with the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies not only because all three were written in succession during the years between 1878 and 1893, but most of all because of the composer's near obsession with a 'fate' theme that became a common unifying force in each of these works. It was an emotional time of turmoil in Tchaikovsky's life as he struggled to come to terms with personal issues in his life; his death coming only shortly after the last of these three 'fateful' works was premiered.

In May of 1888, prior to composing the second of the trilogy, (his Fifth Symphony), Tchaikovsky had written to his brother Modeste: "To speak frankly, I feel as yet no impulse for creative work. What does this mean? Have I written myself out? No ideas, no inclination! Still, I am hoping to collect, little by little, material for a symphony." It had been three years since the composer had written a major work for orchestra, and the previous one, the

'Manfred' Symphony (1885), had not been successfully received. Prior to this, it had been ten years since his previous orchestral attempt, the Violin Concerto (1878).

In 1891, Tchaikovsky had been in America on tour when his usual bouts of self-doubt re-surfaced: "I feel that something within me has gone to pieces." Not only was he feeling the effects of physical age, but he also questioned whether he had it in him to compose again. A year later, in 1892 he began composing a new symphony but then called it "an empty pattern of sounds without inspiration" and tore it up. In late winter of 1893, he wrote his nephew: "What I need is to believe in myself again for my faith has been greatly undermined; it seems to me my role is over." It was with these experiences recently in his mind that he finally broke through and began composing this, the Sixth Symphony.

Unlike the Fourth Symphony, Tchaikovsky did not leave a specific set of program notes for his Fifth or Sixth Symphonies. But after his death, some notes were found amongst his sketches, which gave an indication regarding his

ideas for the 'Fate' theme for his Fifth Symphony. And it seemed the program ideas for his Sixth Symphony were to be left even more vague as he stated:

"Just as I was starting on my journey the idea came to me for a new symphony, this time with a program, but a program which will remain an enigma to all. Let them guess it who can. It will be called 'A Programmatic Symphony.' During my trip, while composing in my mind, I frequently shed tears. When I got home I settled down to sketch it, and the work went so furiously that I had the first movement completely ready in less than four days and the remaining movements are already clearly outlined in my head. Half the third movement is already done. There will be much innovation of form in this symphony and incidentally, the finale will not be a noisy allegro but, on the contrary, a long drawn-out adagio. You can't imagine what bliss I feel, being convinced that my time is not yet passed and I can still work. Perhaps, of course, I'm mistaken, but I don't think so."

Indeed, Tchaikovsky's persistent self-doubt continued to raise its ugly head, even amidst his own exuberation at finding his creative juices flowing again. Yet he did indeed incorporate innovative form in this symphony. The foremost of these being the 5/4 meter used in the second movement, beautifully wrought in a pseudo-waltz feel; as well as the unusual third movement with its uplifting march, which many often mistake as being the finale; and last but not least, as he mentioned in his correspondence with his nephew, contrary to the usual custom,

the slow movement was relegated to the last, emphasizing to the very depths, the descending scales found throughout the symphony.

Following its premiere on October 28th, 1893, Tchaikovsky, in conversation with his brother Modest, contemplated an alternate 'name' for this symphony that could be sent with the manuscript to the publisher. It was after some deliberation that 'pathétique' was settled on. And although much debate surrounds the untimely death of the composer within days following its premiere, that he may have either been writing his own requiem (with references to the Mass for the Dead throughout), or perhaps even more likely, reflecting on the recent deaths of several dear friends, there is no doubt that as Tchaikovsky himself states: "Without exaggeration, I have put my whole soul into this work." And in a note to his publisher: "I give you my word that never in my life have I been so contented, so proud, so happy, in the knowledge that I have written a good piece."

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (3rd doubling on piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, tam-tam, strings

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