

# Program Notes

By April L. Racana

Sunday, October 30 The 871st Suntory Hall Subscription Concert

Opera City

10/30

Orchard Hall

10/30

Suntory Hall

10/30

## Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) Piano Concerto No. 26 in D major, “Krönung” K.537

- I. Allegro (ca. 13 min)
- II. (Larghetto) (ca. 6 min)
- III. (Allegretto) (ca. 9 min)

By the time Mozart had left the service of the Archbishop in Salzburg to pursue his musical career in Vienna in 1781, he had already composed six piano concertos. But it was during his years in Vienna that he not only relied on additional compositions in this genre to establish himself both as a composer and as a pianist, but also depended on them for financial support. Some might say he was in fact shrewd in his timing for composing and presenting some of these works for public, as many were premiered during the Lenten season when the majority of theatres in the region were closed, so that competition for an audience was greatly reduced.

His business acumen aside, Mozart’s renown for his mastery as a concerto composer continues to this day. Scholars point to his development as a composer through his various concerti, the first of which was composed when he was still a child at the age of eleven. The last was composed in 1791, the same year of his death. The first concerti were more along the lines of arrangements of other composers’ sonatas, with the addition of orchestral interludes and accompaniments. But it wasn’t long before he created his own thematic material on his way to composing 27 piano concertos, more than any other composer.

The *Piano Concerto No. 26 in D minor* was completed in February of 1788, one of two final works of this genre that were composed during the last years of his life. The premiere was given in April of 1789 in Dresden when the composer was on tour in Germany. However it would be the performance the following year in Frankfurt that would give the work its “Coronation”(Krönung) title, when it was presented as part of festivities for the coronation of Leopold II as the Holy Roman Emperor, October of 1790.

The solo piano part was initially only written in sketches with the left hand part often left nearly blank or with just a simple outline, given that Mozart probably knew himself how he would fill this in. This has left scholars and soloists the additional job of determining the composers’ intent for these missing parts. Scholars believe this work may be looking forward to the Romantic style given that there seems to be more of an emphasis on virtuosity in the solo piano, rather than the Classical style where there was more of a balance between the orchestra and soloist. Consequently it would become the most popular of all of Mozart’s concerti during the 19th century.

**Instrumentation:** solo piano, flute, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, strings

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# Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

## Symphony No. 1 in D major

One of the great composers in the Austro-German tradition, Mahler was well known as a conductor as well. He completed nine symphonies and numerous orchestral songs, not only expanding the size of the ensembles, but also incorporating new instrumental explorations in various combinations. In addition, he infused song (or 'lieder') into his symphonies. His exposure as a child to a large repertoire of folksongs had great effect on his themes, as can be heard in this symphony, as well as many of his other works.

Perhaps the key feature of Mahler's compositions is in this very close relationship between the lieder and symphonies. The First Symphony, composed initially in 1888, and variously revised over the years, draws much of its material from his song cycle *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (1883-1885). The first movement takes its thematic motives from the second of this collection of lieder. *Hans und Grethe*, a lieder composed when Mahler was 20 years old, supplies several motifs for the second movement, while *Freres Jacques* provides the framework for the minor Funeral March of the third movement. The fourth movement uses a typical Mahlerian ascending motif that is often heard when wishing to express ascension to a higher order. This is perhaps in direct contrast to the descending fourth heard in the first movement which is meant to portray the sound of a cuckoo (typically given a descending third) and more earthly aspects of nature and spring.

It has been said that Mahler wrote program notes of his own to assist the audiences of his time to better understand this work, at the time titled *Symphonic Poem*. And although he insisted that

the eventual subtitle *Titan* did not reflect accurately any reference to Jean Paul Richter's novel of the same name, the program notes seemed to suggest otherwise, since some of the original titles ascribed to each of the movements seem to be borrowed from Mr. Richter. Here then are excerpts from Mahler's own program notes that show his inclination to integrate lieder into his symphony as well as perhaps themes from significant literature of the time:

### Part I

'Memories of Youth': fruit, flower and thorn pieces

#### 1. 'Spring goes on and on' (Introduction and Allegro comodo).

The introduction describes nature's awakening from its long winter sleep

#### 2. 'Blumine' (Andante) *later omitted*

#### 3. 'Full sail' (Scherzo)

### Part II

#### 4. 'Aground!' (A funeral march in the style of Callot)

The following will help to explain this movement: the initial inspiration for it was found by the composer in a burlesque engraving: 'The Huntsman's Funeral', well known to all Austrian children, and taken from an old book of fairy stories.... This movement is intended to express a mood alternating between ironic gaiety and uncanny brooding, which is then suddenly interrupted by:

#### 5. 'Dall'Inferno' (Allegro Furioso)

The sudden outburst of despair from a deeply wounded heart.

**Instrumentation:** 4 flutes (2 doubling on piccolos), 4 oboes (doubling on English horn), 4 clarinets (doubling on bass clarinet, doubling on E-flat clarinet), 3 bassoons (doubling on contrabassoon), 7 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani (2 players), bass drum, cymbals, triangle, tam-tam, harp, strings