



The Many Faces of Mozart **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791)**

Principal Guest Artist:
Lindsay Deutsch, Violin

Violin Concerto No. 3
Allegro
Adagio
Rondeau-Allegro

Three German Dances
No. 1
No. 2
No. 3

Symphony No. 40
Molto Allegro
Andante
Allegretto
Allegro assai

An auspicious beginning

It was 1761 in Salzburg, Austria, and the little five-year old boy named Joannes Chrysostomos Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart (later called Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart) danced his way into the hearts of those in the audience with his first appearance as a public performer. The occasion was a celebration of the end of the academic year and the play was “Sigismundus Rex.” This was a banner year for the little boy. He had been playing the violin and piano for a couple of years, and had just composed his first piece of music.

Three years later, he had composed his first symphony and had already performed throughout Europe, including highly acclaimed appearances before royalty.

A life cut short

During the next 27 years, there were very few Europeans throughout the continent who weren't aware of the “many faces of Mozart,” for he was recognized as an exceptionally talented composer and performer. Tragically, he died at the age of 35, probably of rheumatic fever, although recent studies indicate that he may have died of “strep throat.”

Looking at the many faces of Mozart

It's a fact that the most successful composers throughout history could “do many things.” Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was no exception, and he did them very well!

- He was an extraordinary performer - on the clavichord, the piano, the violin, and as a dancer
- He was a prolific and popular composer, writing in every major genre of the day: symphonies, operas, chamber music, choral music, concertos and dances
- He wrote religious music, but also wrote many forms of light entertainment
- His compositions reflected humor and joy...as well as sorrow and passion
- His melodies were often simple, with haunting beauty, but he also wrote complicated contrapuntal works.
- His music reflected the influence of his extensive travels throughout Europe – Italy, England, Germany and France
- He prospered at times, employing servants, but had many years of financial hardship, borrowing money from friends
- He enjoyed billiards and dancing and kept pets: a canary, a starling, a dog and a horse

Violin Concerto No. 3

If only you would focus

The son of a violin teacher, Mozart was trained to play the violin before he was five and he became very proficient at playing the instrument, but his heart seemed to be elsewhere. His father Leopold Mozart once wrote that his son could be the best violinist in Europe if only he would put his mind to it.

However, it's doubtful that he would have been hired to be the konzertmeister and organist at the court of Archbishop Colloredo in Salzburg had he not been an exceptional violinist.

Here are your violin concertos – now I'm off to Mannheim

He only wrote five violin concertos, and it is believed that they were written between 1773 and 1777 during his tenure with Archbishop Colloredo. Mozart wrote them knowing that he would play the part of the soloist. Shortly after he finished writing Violin Concerto No. 5, he resigned his commission. The 21-year-old composer was ready to write operas and Salzburg wasn't that interested in operas. He never wrote another violin concerto.

The most beautiful of all

Violin Concerto No. 3 is far more sophisticated than the first two concertos so it is widely believed that there was at least a two-year gap between Concerto No. 2 and Concerto No. 3, the most popular of the five. Most scholars agree that Mozart reached his full maturity when he composed this concerto.

Mozart built his concertos around a beautiful melody, allowing the soloist to take on the role of a singer. In his mind, instrumental solo concertos were closely related to operatic arias. The Adagio movement of this concerto is often considered to be the most beautiful and quintessential Mozart of any of his compositions.

Three German Dances

A dancer in his heart

It was well known that Mozart loved to dance. Biographer Nissen (who married Mozart's widow Constanze several years after his death) reported that "he passionately loved dancing, and missed neither the public masked balls in the theatre, nor his friends' domestic balls. And he danced very well indeed, particularly the minuet." Mozart's friend Michael Kelly wrote, "As great as Mozart's genius was, he was an enthusiast in dancing, and often said that his taste lay in that art, rather than in music."

As a boy, Mozart had many opportunities to go dancing as his parents often hosted dancing in their homes. Later, after his move to Vienna with his wife Constanze, the couple often hosted balls.

He once wrote to his father, "Last week I gave a ball in my own rooms – but it goes without saying that the young beaux paid 2 florins each; we began at 6 in the evening and stopped at 7 – what? Only an hour? – no, no, at seven in the morning."

"They pay me too much for what I do, too little for what I could do" – Mozart.

Mozart began composing dances when he was only five years old and he continued composing minuets and dance music for various occasions throughout his life. Although he was able to compose dances very quickly – he once completed nine dances for Count Johann Pachta in one hour after he had failed to complete them earlier – he did not find composing dances to be very challenging. However, the pay was good, and they were popular.

Not just a minuet

The German dance was associated with the lower social classes and was said to be immoral. It was much livelier than the minuet and resembled the waltz. The dancers were in close physical contact with each other and the constant spinning often resulted in dizziness. Even so, it was a popular dance throughout Europe.

These dances were normally played by a scaled-down orchestra in which there were no violas and the bass and cello played the same line. A variety of wind instruments were usually included and trumpets and timpani were sometimes included. Instruments not usually found in the orchestra of Mozart's time were often added: fife and drum, tambourine, tuned sleigh-bells, the hurdy-gurdy, the post horn and the flageolet, which was the piccolo of the day.

Mozart's German dances

This set of German dances was composed for organized ball dancing in Vienna during the latter part of Mozart's life.

He titled the third dance of this set, a well-known holiday tune, "Die Schlittenfahrt" ("The Sleigh Ride"). It depicts a sleigh ride, a popular winter pastime of the court, with bells jingling and post horns sounding. The melody was based upon an Austrian folk-tune.

Symphony No. 40

It's a mystery

It was the summer of 1788 and Wolfgang had no court appointment. He was very low on money so he and Constanze had moved to the outskirts of Vienna. This is where he composed his three greatest and final symphonies, Nos. 39, 40 and 41.

Why were they written?

Were they intended to be a series of subscription concerts that never materialized or were cancelled for insufficient interest?

Did he intend to present them during a trip to England where German composers, led by Handel, had met with great success?

Did he hope to publish them as a single opus?

Or did he just want to create music without worrying about the demands of patrons or the public?

No one knows the answer. He died three years later, and we don't even know if they were performed during his lifetime.

A familiar melody

Even people who claim no familiarity with classical music will recognize the opening bars of Symphony No. 40 because of its frequent use in movies and on TV. Children are taught to sing along with the melody, "It's a bird, it's a plane; no, it's Mozart!"

A timeless treasure

It is one of the very few symphonies which Mozart wrote in a minor key (G minor). It's been speculated that its minor key reflected some of the composer's inner feelings during this low point in his life, but no one knows if that is true.

This symphony is often considered to be the beginning of modern symphonic composition as we know it today. Mozart infused the form of the symphony with a new kind of romantic expression.

It is generally acclaimed to be one of the best – not only among Mozart's 600+ works, but among all symphonic works of the century.

Did you know?

- There are over 600 compositions by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
- A number of composers have paid homage to Mozart by writing sets of variations on his themes – among them, Beethoven, Chopin, Reger and Tchaikovsky
- Mozart married the sister of the woman he had unsuccessfully courted several years earlier
- Mozart and his wife, Constanze Weber, had six children, but only two lived to adulthood, Carl Thomas and Franz Xaver
- Mozart died while he was composing *Requiem*
- Mozart's grave is unmarked
- Mozart was very good at mathematics, often scribbling math figures on walls and tables