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Ensemble Concerts: Symphony Orchestra, October 2, 1973

Arthur Corra Conductor

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music

college of fine arts
illinois state university

Illinois State University
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Arthur Corra, Conductor

Soloists: Members of the Reicha Quintet

Timothy Hurtz, oboe
Aris Chavez, clarinet
Philip Hillstrom, horn
Russell Bedford, bassoon

Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro*, K. 492 — Mozart

Sinfonia Concertante in E-Flat Major K. 297b, for Oboe, Clarinet, Horn, Bassoon and Orchestra — Mozart
- Allegro
- Adagio
- Andantino con Variazioni

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 4 in F Minor, Op. 36 — Tchaikovsky
- Andante sostenuto; Moderato con anima
- Andantino in modo di canzona
- Scherzo: Pizzicato ostinato
- Finale: Allegro con fuoco

Capen Auditorium
Tuesday, October 2, 1973
8:00 pm

Future Performances of the ISU Symphony Orchestra:

Tosca—November 3 at the University Auditorium
Concert—December 13 at the University Auditorium

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is one of the few composers to whom the title "universal genius in music" is applicable. Whether it be concerti, symphonies, chamber music, or opera, his creative efforts are among the greatest in all music, and he crowded them into a brief lifetime of 35 years. But if any part of the field of music could be said to be his favorite, it was opera. His letters to his father bear this out. One dated Mannheim, February, 1778, reads: "I beg of you to do your best to get us to Italy. You know my greatest desire is to write operas. . . I envy anyone who is composing one."

Two factors in Mozart's crowded life help to explain much about him as a composer. The first was his incredible ability at an early age. A child prodigy, his musical training began at age four with his father; he studied both violin and harpsichord. This training was absorbed quickly and thoroughly, so that by the age of ten or twelve he had the musical sophistication and perception of an adult. The second grows out of the first: by reason of his precocity in performance he traveled all over Europe while still a child. Shepherded by his father on these travels (Leopold Mozart was himself an accomplished musician), he heard and absorbed the best music of the day in Austria, Germany, Italy, England, and France. Consequently, he was in a unique position to draw on the major musical currents around him as he composed.

Opera was the gateway to musical success in the second half of the eighteenth century. The musician's mecca was still Italy. Although Mozart had performed before the crowned heads of Europe at the age of six, and by ten had traveled throughout Germany, Switzerland, and Holland as well as to Paris and London, it was not until 1769, his thirteenth year, that he visited Italy. On that tour Mozart composed his third opera!

The Marriage of Figaro on a libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte after Beauchmarchais' comedy *Le Mariage de Figaro*, was composed in 1786 and first performed in Vienna in May of that year. It has since been universally considered Italian comic opera at its highest stage of perfection. The Overture, a gay and sparkling piece with no thematic relationship to the opera is in sonata form without development.

The *Sinfonia Concertante* for oboe, clarinet, horn, bassoon and orchestra ranks among Mozart's greatest symphonic scores, a landmark in the history of both the symphony and the concerto. Though modelled partially on the old concerto grosso style, it is, as Einstein says, not quite "a concerto for four wind instruments with orchestra accompaniment," nor is it a "symphony in which four wind instruments have prominent solo parts," it lies instead between the two.

The incentive to compose this work came to Mozart when he visited Mannheim on his musical tour begun in the fall of 1777, which also took him to Paris early in 1778. Mannheim boasted the finest orchestra in Europe with some of the foremost instrumental virtuosi of the time. The presence in Paris of four of these musicians—the flutist Johann Wendling, the oboist Friedrich Ramm, the horn player Johann Punto, and the bassoonist G. W. Ritter—all friendly disposed toward the young composer, prompted him to write this score.

When Mozart arrived in Paris, the main interest of the musical world was the operatic feud between adherents of Gluck and Piccini. On the advice of his father, Wolfgang avoided taking sides, but to his chagrin he discovered people took very little notice of him. Though he had excellent contacts in Paris, the doors these opened were soon politely closed. "People pay compliments, it is true," he wrote his father, "but there it ends. They arrange for me to come on such and such a day. I play and hear them exclaim: 'He is a prodigy, he is inconveivable, he is astonishing!,' and then it is—Adieu." For a serious and sensitive msucian this was disappointing treatment. In time, he ceased paying homage to French nobility and in so doing failed to secure as many pupils as he needed.

An introduction to Jean Le Gros, director of the musical society "Concerts de la Loge Olympique," brought Mozart a minor commission of supplying several choruses to a *Miserere* by Ignaz Holzbauer. At the instigation of his musical friends from Mannheim, he wrote the *Sinfonia Concertante*, which was destined, because of some well-planned intrigue, to await performance for several months. (It was discovered on the day it was first scheduled for performance that the score had been mislaid and the parts not copied.) Eventually, it was given two performances and had a resounding success both times. Prior to the performances of this work, Mozart had already had success with his *Symphony No. 31 in D Major, K. 297* (now known as the "Paris" Symphony). Hence, with the subsequent favorable reception of the *Sinfonia Concertante*, Le Gros commissioned a new symphony.

Though the *Sinfonia Concertante* was written for flute, oboe, horn and bassoon, the version published and performed today replaces the flute with the clarinet. At Mannheim Mozart found clarinets established in the orchestra for the first time in Germany, and quickly recognized the potential of the instrument, writing enthusiastically to his father: ". . . if only we had clarinets. You cannot guess the lovely effect of a symphony with flutes, oboes, and clarinets." That he lost no time in acknowledging their worth is indicated by his inclusion of two clarinets in the scoring of his *D Major Symphony* for Le Gros.

Symphony Orchestra Personnel

1st Violin
Joung-Sook Noh
Joan Svoboda
Debbie Perry
Terryl Jares
Deborah Matskas
Martha Barker
Bang Hee Lee
Gregg Oakley
Ae-Sil Kim
Jung Min Wooh
Hye Young Chung
Christie Schrader

2nd Violin
Frank Schwarzwalder
Beth Palma
Kathy Hurst
Pam Combs
LuAnn Holstine
Barb Fiechtl
Mary Lynn Krueger
Alison Holste

Viola
Karen Dickelman
Chris Reichert
David Hawkins
Lynn Hirschauer
Michael Traver
Kim Chao
Helen Zamie
Susan Nelligan

Cello
Jeanne Foster
Peter Garfield
Darilyn Manring
Young Ju Lee
David Reece
Kathy Watson

String Bass
Pam Burd
Scott Kreger
Bary Kolman
Michael Johannesen
Debra Buchanan
Holly Hertel
Steven Hayes
Sue Kasanov
Carol Jansen
George Gillham

Flute
Janet MacMillan
Gaye Stucki
Sue Reiland
Kathy Kallas

Piccolo
Nancy Widmer

Oboe
Marvin Carlton
Jan Lohs
Beth Christensen
Pat Seino

Clarinet
Wayne Montag
Margaret Meyer

Bassoon
Terry Grush
Grant Gillett
Suzann Howe

Horn
Peter Johnson
Susan Foster
Rodger Burnett
William Lawyer
Tim Swenson

Trumpet
David Golden
Robert Fund

Trombone
David Kotowski
Michael Fischer
Mark Victor

Tuba
Edward Firth

Timpani
Philip Henry

Percussion
Thomas Hensold
Alan Isaacson
Debra Crawford

Librarians
Jeanne Foster
Marvin Carlton

Set-Up
Frank Schwarzwalder

It is strange that the score of this compelling and beautiful *Sinfonia Concertante* was lost from 1778 to the early 1920's, probably due to the fact that Mozart failed to retain a copy when he sold the work to Le Gros. Just when the clarinet was substituted for the flute is unknown, but as Mozart had found new favor in this instrument and the part is written in a manner ideally suited to it, it is quite possible he accomplished or sanctioned the change himself.

The work is in three movements. The first movement is in sonata form with the double exposition characteristic of classical concerti. The second movement is lyric and full of gentle melancholy. The third movement is a set of ten variations on a simple, folklike theme. Following the brief tenth variation, there is a short Adagio, after which comes a Coda in 6 / 8 meter based on the theme.

One may listen to Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 4* in two distinct ways: some may even prefer to draw no clear division, but to fuse the approaches or gravitate from one to the other. In one, the hearer receives the work as a piece of serious music, an "absolute" construction of musical materials, with its emotional effects unexplained by words. The other way takes its starting point from Tchaikovsky's own remark about this *Symphony*: "I should be sorry," he wrote, "if symphonies that mean nothing should flow from my pen, co is sting solely of a progression of harmonies, rhythms, and modulations. Most assuredly my *Symphor y* has a program, but one that cannot be expressed in words; the very attempt would be ludicrous. . . Should not a symphony reveal those wordless urges that hide in the heart, asking earnestly for expression?"

Musical meaning is not opposed to verbal meaning, but it is not at all synonymous with it. "Music is articulate," wrote Santayana, "but articulate in a language which avoids, or at least veils, the articulation of the world we live in." Mendelssohn when even further: "What any music I like expresses for me is not thoughts too indefinite to clothe in words, but too definite."

Tchaikovsky, it appears was not at all sure of his stand on the issue, and his inconsistency is revealing. he *did* produce an analysis in words, and a very detailed one, for his patroness and friend Mme. von Meck. Yet it was almost not mailed, for in a postscript the composer added: "Just as I was putting my letter into the envelope I began to read it again and to feel misgivings as to the confused and incomplete program which I am sending you. For the first time in my life I have attempted to put my musical thoughts and forms into words and phrases. I have not been very successful. I was horribly out of spirits all the time I was composing this *Symphony* last winter, and this is a true echo of my feelings at the time. But only an echo. How is it possible to reproduce it in clear and definite language? I do not know. I have already forgotten a good deal. Only the general impression of my passionate and sorrowful experiences had remained. . ."

The biographical events of the 1877 cannot be held responsible for the creation of the *Fourth Symphony*. That his disastrous marriage, his attempt at suicide, and other personal and clinical details strongly influenced the mood and material of the *Symphony* cannot be doubted. But the *Symphony* would surely have been written in any case, sounding much the way it does regardless of external circumstances. All Tchaikovsky needed to do was to be sincere in the expression of his musical feelings, and no one has ever faulted him for that. In fact, some wish he had practiced greater reticence in the sphere of sound. "You may dislike his emotional world," writes Martin Cooper, "the panting, palpitating phrases, the strident colors, the sobs and bursts of hysterical defiance; but you never for a moment doubt that this was Tchaikovsky's inmost self. . ."—transformed, one might add, into a language with its own laws and syntax, and therefore sublimated at least to some degree. When Robert Vischer claims that "the artist is the content of the work of art," one must juxtapose that striking concept with Susanne Langer's view that—however high the degree of emotional temperature—what the artist is really engaged in is not "self-expression" but the search for "significant form." Music, she writes, is "a source of insight, not a plea for sympathy. . .For what music can actually reflect is only the morphology of feeling."

Tchaikovsky's verbal description of his *Symphony* might help to focus a listener's vague sensations. However, one may feel that it is unnecessary—like a filming of a novel, it may substitute new appearances for those created in the readers' imagination, and may come into sharp conflict with them. For Tchaikovsky, the difference between a symphony and a symphonic poem was slight, depending only on whether the program was left untold or was actually offered. Even though Tchaikovsky divulged the story in his mind, any different conception, even a purely musical one with its own set of meanings, remains equally justified. Had the letter to Mme. von Meck been lost, would the Symphony not have survived jsut as sturdily?

"The work is patterned after Beethoven's Fifth," Tchaikovsky wrote, "not as to musical content, but as to the basic idea. Don't you see a program in the 'Fifth'?" Generally, that idea is considered to be inexorable fate." Thus when Tchaikovsky begins his first movement with a horn call of fierce demeanor, he can say that it is "the kernel, the quintessence, the chief thought of the whole *Symphony*. It is Fate, the relentless force which prevents one from attaining the goal of happiness. . .it is

Damocles' sword, hanging over the head in constant, unremitting, spiritual torment. There is nothing to be done but submit to it and lament in vain." (A striking unijying feature of the work is the fact that virtually every theme in the *Symphony* contains or even stresses the "tetrachord," a four-note structure within the compass of the interval of the perfect fourth, most often in a descending direction: for instance, F, E, D, C, as well as a number of chromatic variants.)

This mood of lamenting submission begins the body of the movement with what has been called "a strangled, despairing waltz." The music comes to a "slow boil," with some of the composer's characteristic by-play between wind and string choirs. "Would it not be better to turn away from reality and lull oneself in dreams?" Tchaikovsky goes on to describe his pleasure in this dream of escape from depression and hopelessness. A theme from the clarinet is answered by twittering woodwind figures. This tune is soon combined with the second subject, in varying combinations of colors. The "desperate" waltz theme appears in a noncommittal version for the winds, and there is conflict between the main ideas. The "Fate" theme heralds the development or free fantasia, appearing again to introduce the recapitulation and the coda, where it is overcome by the rhythm of the first idea, now much less waltz-like.

The second movement "describes suffering in another stage...a feeling of lonely melancholy. How sweet it is to think of the days of one's youth!" The first melody is indeed a nostalgic one, long-breathed and plaintively sung by the oboe. The declamatory answering phrase is unmistakably Russian in character. The middle section brings a more virile mood, but still restrained. Horn and trumpet calls remind of the "fate" theme without stating it outright. The opening tune returns, this time embellished by little woodwind figures very much related to the twittering ones in the first movement. No wonder Tchaikovsky refers here to "swarms of memories!" The ending dies away with the flickering shadows of the main melody.

The Scherzo is one of the composer's finest movements. Its technical idea resides in its title: *Pizzicato ostinato*. The stringed instrument players put aside their bows and pluck throughout the movement; the sound of a balalaika orchestra may have been in Tchaikovsky's mind. His own verbal description is unusually apt: ". . .a succession of capricious arabesques, those intangible images that pass through the mind when one has drunk wine and feels the first touch of intoxication. . .The mood is not sad, nor is it cheerful; one thinks of nothing in particular, but gives free rein to the fancy of discovering new patterns. Suddenly comes to mind a picture of a drunken peasant; a brief street song is heard. (Oboe, later piccolo.) Far off, a military procession passes. (Full brass, *staccatissimo*, but *piano*.) Such are the disconnected pictures which float through the mind when one is falling asleep. Their connection with reality is nil; they remain unintelligible, bizarre, fragmentary."

Tchaikovsky suggests that in the Finale the unhappy dreamer look outside himself for amusement, and depicts for him a peasant festival in which to take part. "If you find no joy within yourself, look for it in others. Go to the people. See, they know how to make the most of their time, how to give themselves up to pleasure! But," he warns, "hardly have you had a chance to lose yourself in the joy of others when relentless Fate again reminds you of its presence. Yet the crowd pays no attention to your sorrows. How cheerful they all are! Why will you still claim that all the world is drowned in vigorous joy. Rejoice in the happiness of others, and life will still be possible for you.—I can tell you no more, dear friend, about the *Symphony*. Naturally my description is not very clear or satisfactory. But there lies the peculiarity of instrumental music; we cannot analyze it. 'Music begins where words leave off,' as Hein has said."

Three themes can be discerned in the "Un-analyzable" Finale. The first has an explosive, brilliant sonority, the spiraling shape of a fireworks display. The second is based on the tune of a Russian folksong, "In the fields there stands a birch-tree." And in the march-like third theme, drums and cymbals have a heyday.