

Notes on Tonight's Program

The second Flute Concerto in D major of **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** began life as his Oboe Concerto in C major, composed for the new Salzburg court oboist in 1777 (and perhaps best known to audiences today in that incarnation.) In 1778, while in Mannheim, Mozart met the wealthy Dutch surgeon Ferdinand De Jean, an amateur flutist, who commissioned a number of flute works from him (“three small, easy, and short concerti, and a pair of quartets,” he relates in a letter to his father Leopold.) ; Mozart seems to have written only the Flute Concerto in G major K. 313 (285e) and the flute quartet K 285 as new works for him, and reworked the oboe piece as well; in turn, De Jean paid him only half of the agreed-upon fee, a fact that angered Mozart’s father, as their subsequent correspondence makes clear.

Felix Mendelssohn traveled widely during the years 1829-1833, visiting England twice and spent extended periods in Italy and in Paris, becoming acquainted with many of the prominent personages of his time. Major works from this period include his Fourth and Fifth Symphonies (the Second and Third were actually composed several years later). En route from Italy to France he sojourned in Munich, where on 17 October 1831 he introduced his First Piano Concerto, op. 25. The contrast between vigorous first theme and lyrical second theme is true to concerto convention, but the composer's placement of both in the solo part is striking, bringing to mind the opening bars of the Fourth Concerto of Beethoven (a work Mendelssohn performed at court in Paris upon his arrival there in December 1831). The soloist's rapid passagework dominates the texture; there is also some lovely wind writing, and the orchestral statement of the first theme (which in varied form serves as the coda as well) is inspired.

Mendelssohn was a prodigy in a variety of pursuits in addition to music. He was a gifted visual artist, and devoured literature, spending a fortnight as a youth in the company of Goethe in Weimar. He encountered Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* at age sixteen, and soon thereafter composed his overture on the play for two pianos, scoring it for orchestra the next year. It was first heard in public at a concert at Stettin in February 1827 during which he also appeared as piano soloist in a piano concerto and, after intermission, joined the first violin section for a performance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. Amazing. The work is the first so-called “concert overture,” not tied to any theatrical performance, but rather a self-contained musical representation of a literary work. As such, it is the progenitor of all such overtures, from Berlioz (“Rob Roy,” “Roman Carnival”) to Tchaikovsky (“Romeo and Juliet,” “Manfred”), and even to some degree of the tone poems of Liszt and Strauss. The piece is more than a mere “curtain-raiser”, rather, it inscribes in music the entire narrative arc of the play, as Mendelssohn describes in an 1833 note to his publishers (the overture had been performed widely before that time in manuscript, including in Paris and London):

I believe it will suffice to remember how the rulers of the elves, Oberon and Titania, constantly appear throughout the play with all their train, now here and now there; then comes Prince Theseus of Athens and joins a hunting party in the forest...then the two pairs of tender lovers, who lose and find themselves; finally the troop of clumsy, coarse tradesmen, who ply their ponderous amusements; then again the elves, who entice all—and on this the piece is constructed. When at the end all is happily resolved...the elves return and bless the house, and disappear as morning arrives. So ends the play, and also my overture.

All of this is cast in a sonata form. The opening wind chords signal enchantment, followed by the scurrying fairies in the violins; the Lord of the Elves appears, in one of the great orchestral tuttis; and after the ravishing love theme in the strings, the bass drone notes usher in the comic tradesman (listen here for the string “hee-haw” of Bottom, transformed into an ass, braying.) After an unsettled development (the plot thickens), a plaintive version of the love music conjures up Hermia, abandoned by Lysander. All is put to right, however, and after what seems like the final chords the fairies return in a coda that ends wistfully as Oberon and Titania are reconciled, the mortals are blessed by the elves, and Puck turns to address the audience:

If we shadows have offended, /Think but this and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here /While these visions did appear...
So, good night unto you all.
Give me your hands, if we be friends, /And Robin shall restore amends.

Ludwig van Beethoven wrote his *Eroica* Symphony during the period of personal crisis brought on by his increasing deafness, despair to which he gives voice in his Heiligenstatt Testament of 1803. The first sketches for the piece date to 1802; it was largely composed in 1804, and was first publicly heard in April 1805. This most famous of Beethoven's works was indeed first inscribed to Napoleon and perhaps was intended to be dedicated to him, though whether the inscription was removed in a fit of rage as the popular anecdote suggests or for more practical reasons (the dissolution of plans for a visit to Paris, or a more profitable exclusive arrangement with Prince Lobkowitz, one of the composer's patrons) is unclear. *Sinfonia eroica* was first used only in 1806 with the work's publication.

The work's innovations have been amply chronicled. It certainly expanded the dimensions of the genre, a fact not lost on early hearers; a critic for the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, one of "Herr Beethoven's greatest admirers," lamented that the work "lasted *an entire hour*." In the first movement, Beethoven incorporated many new elements into traditional symphonic sonata form (a distinctive theme introduced in an expanded development section, a massive coda, the famous muffled false recapitulation in the horn). Overall, perhaps the most striking aspect here is the bare simplicity of the subject matter—a short arpeggio cello theme, a series of cross-accented chords, a gentle repeated-note second theme—and the sheer wealth of inventive use to which these materials are put. Also remarkable, for a work regarded by early critics as so "noisy," are the frequent delicate touches: the unexpected pianos and the crescendos vanishing into thin air.

The second movement is a monumental funeral march (years later, upon hearing of the death of Napoleon, Beethoven remarked that "I have already composed the proper music for that catastrophe.") After the hushed opening passage for strings alone, the winds take the theme and the strings offer a dirge drumroll accompaniment. The music turns to the major mode for a central interlude, and the following reprise is interrupted by a severe fugue. In the coda, the theme dissolves into fragments spread among several instruments, as if collapsing in grief.

After the first two weighty movements, the last two return to more human proportions. The third movement, a rollicking scherzo with a trio featuring three hearty horns, banishes forever the stately minuet from this position in the symphonic literature. For the Finale, a set of variations, Beethoven draws upon his ballet *The Creatures of Prometheus*, premiered in March 1801, for his theme. After a short, explosive introduction, the unadorned bass line is heard first in the pizzicato strings, and the first variation adds a jaunty repeated-note counterpoint that will return often. Only in the third variation is the melody proper introduced by the oboe. The variations meander among several keys and there are two extensive fugal passages (the second based on an inversion of the bass line) before we reach a climactic fermata; winds and strings then share in a slow variation, an afterglow of the preceding festivities. This merges with a coda that begins muscularly, tapers almost to silence, then launches anew in a furious dash, with horns leading the way, to the final chords.

The Notre Dame Symphony Orchestra
Spring 2014

Violin I

Robin Lawler, concertmaster
Leo Xu
Jen Ho
Emily Campagna
Evan Brizius
Morgan Hallas
Jisung Park
Madeline Cook
Jenna Ahn
Michelle Kim
Steph Sonnick
Isabel Cabezas
Vanessa Wall

Violin II

Michael MacGillivray, principal
Brynelle Rozario
Sarah Smith
Patrick McCormack
Adrienne Bruggerman
Adelle Barte
Theresa Puhr
Kevin Lee
Mariah Sasson
Peter Chung
Josh Perozek
Da Som Kim
Adam Rene Rosenbaum
Chris Walker
Zack Horne
Sarah Tsai
Kelly O'Shea
Jessica Carter

Viola

Tara Pilato, principal
Minh Nguyen
Maureen Gavin
Connor Goodman
Emily Punzalan
Daniela Tomas
Courtney Schaefer
Olivia Till
Natalie Wozniak
Matthew Colturi
Madeline Inglis

Cello

Gavin Hsu, principal
Alex Groesch
Brian Hall
Petra Rantanen
Moira Horn
Erin Portman
Ryan McMullen
Drew Martin
Max Wipson
Will Carey

Bass

Ray Heberer, principal
Michael Thompson
Nathaniel Fuerst
Taylor Becht

Flute

Jessica Meaux, principal
Jennifer Cochrane
Rachelle Gosioco

Oboe

Stephen High, principal
Olivia Gutgsell
Ellie Norby

Clarinet

Sonia Urquidi, principal
John McCready

Bassoon

Mike Reinsvold, principal
Lukas O'Donnell

French Horn

Keaton Bloom, principal
Sam Proulx
Ned Vogel

Trumpet

Madelyn Nelson
Anna Bosler

Tuba

David Smith

Percussion

Anthony Villano

