

SAN DIEGO SYMPHONY

October 30-31 and November 1, 2009

WAGNER **Prelude to Act III of *Lohengrin***

BRUCH **Violin Concerto No. 2 in D minor, Op. 44**
Adagio ma non troppo
Allegro moderato
Finale: Allegro molto

INTERMISSION

MOZART **Requiem Mass in D minor, K.626**
Introitus
Kyrie
Sequentia
Dies Irae
Tuba mirum
Rex tremendae
Recordare
Confutatis
Lacrimosa
Offertorium
Domine Jesu
Hostias
Sanctus
Benedictus
Agnus Dei
Communio

Prelude to Act III of *Lohengrin*

RICHARD WAGNER

Born May 22, 1813, Leipzig

Died February 13, 1883, Venice

Wagner composed *Lohengrin*, which he described as a “Romantic Opera in Three Acts,” between 1845 and 1848. It was first performed in Weimar on August 28, 1850, under the direction of Liszt, who told the composer: “Your *Lohengrin* is a noble work from beginning to end. At more than a few places, it brought tears to my eyes.” Wagner, however, was not at that performance, and in fact he did not see a production of this opera for eleven more years. His participation in the revolutionary movement of 1848 had led to the issuing of a warrant for his arrest in Germany, and Wagner had fled to Switzerland. He spent the night of the premiere of *Lohengrin* at the tavern Zum Schwanen in Lucerne, where he followed with his watch what was happening at that same second in Weimar, three hundred miles to the north.

Set in tenth-century Antwerp, the opera tells of the mysterious Lohengrin, knight of the Holy Grail; his bride, the pure but troubled Elsa; and the plot against them by the evil Telramund and his wife Ortrud. The brief Prelude to Act III has become one of Wagner’s most famous works in the concert hall. In the opera, this is the music that raises the curtain on the bridal chamber of Lohengrin and Elsa, where the two are led on their wedding day. An exciting flourish for full orchestra leads to the prelude’s two main themes: a powerful idea for brass over chattering triplets (a portrait of Lohengrin himself on his wedding day) and the gentler second material, introduced by the oboe and associated with Elsa. In the opera, this prelude proceeds quietly into the Third Act, but for the concert hall it has been supplied with a rousing—and very dramatic—conclusion.

Violin Concerto No. 2 in D minor, Op. 44

MAX BRUCH

Born January 6, 1838, Cologne

Died October 2, 1920, Friedenau

In 1876 Max Bruch conducted several performances of the Violin Concerto No. 1 in Germany with the Spanish violinist Pablo de Sarasate as soloist, and he was amazed by the audiences’ reaction: “The public went mad everywhere. I have never experienced anything like it. If I am permitted to use the expression ‘to rave about,’ then I shall rave about this Pablo. An

extraordinary violinist and a charming man. I shall write something for him—that is quite certain.”

Early in 1877 Bruch set to work on his Violin Concerto No. 2, which he dedicated to the Spanish violinist. Sarasate was soloist (and Bruch the conductor) at the premiere, which took place in the Crystal Palace in London on November 4, 1877. On that occasion the performers played from the manuscript, so Bruch was able to revise the music after its premiere. He made that revision based on suggestions from both Sarasate and Joseph Joachim, and the concerto was published in Berlin in 1878.

The Second Violin Concerto has never achieved the popularity of the First, but it is attractive music and in many ways quite an original composition. Though Bruch did not care for program music, he was taken with Sarasate’s “scenario” for this dramatic music, and Bruch’s biographer Christopher Fifield describes this program as depicting:

. . . the aftermath of a battle in the Carlist War. In the first movement (*Adagio*), the battlefield is littered with the dead and the dying, among whom a young woman searches for the man she loves, and a funeral march accompanies a burial procession. The second movement is entitled *Recitative*, in which the solo violin conducts a wordless monologue with orchestral interjections, leading directly into the long, fully developed *Finale* (*allegro molto*) which, with its lively scherzo rhythm, allegedly depicts the tumult of a cavalry regiment.

Listeners are of course free to make of this program what they will, and the Second Violin Concerto may be enjoyed as either abstract music or as music inspired by a particular story.

The originality of this concerto is evident from its first instant. Bruch begins not with the expected fast movement but with an extended slow movement that takes up nearly half the concerto by itself. The elegiac quality of this music is made clear by its two main themes: Bruch specifies that the violin’s grieving opening statement should be *molto espressivo*, and the violin’s falling second subject is marked *tranquillo*. Along the way come great martial outbursts from the orchestra and some brilliant fiddling before the movement reaches its quiet conclusion in D major. Opening a concerto with a slow movement was quite unusual, and a number of people were put off by it—Brahms was quite critical of this concerto for just that reason. It should be noted, however, that this movement—with its elegiac themes and grieving atmosphere—proved

very popular with audiences, and during Bruch's lifetime it was sometimes performed by itself.

The surprises continue in the brief second movement, which Bruch titled *Recitativo*. This movement belongs almost entirely to the soloist. The orchestra provides a framework of chords, and the soloist soars above these chords with varied and brilliant passagework. The *Finale* follows without pause, and alert listeners will recognize that Bruch had outlined the shape of its principal theme in the course of the *Recitativo*. Set in the short metric unit of 3/8, this is a lively dance movement that gives the soloist plenty of opportunity to demonstrate his skill. After all this energy, Bruch's Second Violin Concerto comes to a very sudden close.

Requiem in D minor, K.626

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Born January 27, 1756, Salzburg

Died December 5, 1791, Vienna

More mystery surrounds Mozart's Requiem than any other piece he wrote, and the fantastic story of its creation has become part of the legend. After several difficult years, Mozart's fortunes seemed to have taken a turn for the better in the summer of 1791. Already at work on *Die Zauberflöte*, he received a commission in July to compose an opera for the September celebration in Prague of the coronation of Leopold II—this would be *La Clemenza di Tito*. While at work on *Die Zauberflöte*, Mozart was visited one day at his lodgings in Vienna by a “stranger in gray,” who proposed a mysterious arrangement. The stranger was a representative from someone who wished to commission a requiem. The pay would be handsome, but there was one important stipulation: the identity of the composer was to be kept an absolute secret.

Over the next several months, Mozart began to plan and compose his Requiem. This was a difficult time for the composer, who composed most of *La Clemenza di Tito* in the space of eighteen days and went to Prague to lead the premiere. In the course of these months, Mozart became ill and began to believe certain fantastic notions: that he was being poisoned, that the “stranger in gray” was a visitor from another world, and that the Requiem he was composing would be for himself. Mozart's health and spirits improved briefly after he returned to Vienna and completed the Clarinet Concerto in October, and he was able to get beyond these obsessions and work on the Requiem. About November 20, however, his health deteriorated sharply: he grew weak, his joints and limbs swelled badly, and he struggled to work. On December 4,

friends gathered round his bed to sing through the vocal parts of the Requiem from his manuscript (Mozart himself sang the alto part), but he collapsed when they reached the *Lacrimosa* and died early the next morning, seven weeks short of his thirty-sixth birthday. The manuscript of the Requiem lay unfinished beside him.

From this dismal and confused situation, certain facts *can* be established. The “stranger in gray” was not a visitor from another world, but a representative of Count Franz von Walsegg-Stuppach, a nobleman whose wife Anna had died in February 1791 and who wished now to commission the Requiem and pass it off as his own, hence the condition of secrecy (Mozart may not have found that stipulation as surprising as we do: he had in 1787 composed the song *Als Luise die Briefe* for a friend to pass off as his own). The actual facts of Mozart’s death continue to be mysterious, but there is no evidence to suggest that he was poisoned (he appears to have died of acute rheumatic fever, accelerated in its final stages by overwhelming sepsis). And though he worked on the Requiem up to within hours of his death, he did not dictate any of the music, as a recent motion picture would have us believe (and certainly did not dictate it to Salieri!). But when Mozart died early on the morning of December 5, the Requiem existed only fragmentarily, and some movements had apparently not even been begun. Mozart’s widow Costanze turned the manuscript and sketches over, first, to Johann Eybler and then to Mozart’s pupil Francis Xaver Süssmayr (1766-1803), who created a performing version from them, a version that has been performed—and loved—as “the Mozart Requiem” for the last two centuries.

Given the incomplete state of the Requiem at the time of Mozart’s death, however, questions inevitably remain: how much of the Requiem is authentically Mozart and how much of it is by Süssmayr? And—tantalizingly—how would the Requiem have been different if Mozart had lived to complete it? It is known that Mozart composed and (largely) orchestrated the *Introit* and *Kyrie* and that he had written the vocal parts and figured bass for the next several sections, up through the *Hostias*. At some points he also wrote in instrumental parts or cues, so there is at least a suggestion of his orchestration, and it was not difficult for Süssmayr to create a performing version of these sections. The situation becomes more problematic with the final sections. Süssmayr claimed that the *Sanctus*, *Benedictus*, and *Agnus Dei* were his own work, but Costanze disputed this, claiming that the work was complete in her husband’s sketches and that Süssmayr had merely put them in performing shape.

This situation of itself makes for a certain amount of uncertainty, and while Süssmayr's version has been widely accepted, there have in fact been a number of alternate completions, most recently by Richard Maunder, Duncan Druce, and Robert Levin, and these are sometimes performed today. The Süssmayr version, perhaps because of its direct association with Mozart, remains the "standard" version, and it is this version that is performed at these concerts.

One of the most striking features of the Mozart Requiem is its distinctively dark sonority, which results from Mozart's unusual orchestration, one without flutes, oboes, or French horns. Instead the Requiem emphasizes the lower voices, particularly the smooth, dark sound of basset horns (a part taken by clarinets in modern performances) and bassoons. The absence of French horns is surprising, but in their place three trombones give the climaxes a sonic punch rare in Mozart's music.

The Requiem offers some extraordinarily powerful music, particularly in the sections that Mozart did complete, and these include the dark solemnity of the *Introitus*, the magnificent fugue that opens the *Kyrie*, the driving fury of the *Dies Irae*, and the solo trombone in the *Tuba Mirum*. The final sections Mozart sketched are some of the most memorable: the *Confutatis*, which leaps between the flames of damnation and prayers for salvation, and the expressive *Lacrimosa*, virtually the last music he composed.

Despite the mystery and uncertainty, Mozart's Requiem—even in what Robert Levin calls its "torso" state—is a magnificent work. Beethoven is reported to have said that "if Mozart did not write this music, the man who wrote it was a Mozart." No performing version can be quite the way Mozart himself would have completed it, but as with certain other works left unfinished and "completed" by others—such as Mahler's Tenth Symphony or Puccini's *Turandot*—enough remains complete to give some idea how powerful and moving were Mozart's final thoughts.

Program notes by Eric Bromberger

WHY THIS PROGRAM? - Dr. Melvin G. Goldzband, Symphony Archivist

Oct. 31-Nov 1, 2009:- Maestro Ling: "Concertmaster Jeff Thayer made his own selection of solo piece, the Bruch Second Concerto. It is not as well known as Bruch's famous First Concerto. It needs a bright opening, and the *Lohengrin* Prelude to Act 3 is perfect in popularity, style and length." Continuing, Jahja Ling noted, "The Mozart Requiem is perhaps the

composer's most mature work. I'm using the Süssmayr Edition. He knew Mozart. He even helped the dying composer to write his notes onto music paper, so, logically, it is probably the closest version to being authentic. Once, in Florida, I tried a different edition, with a different ending, but to me it wasn't quite Mozart. There are so many legends about this music but it stands alone, without them, as great."

The only performance at these concerts of the Bruch Second Concerto for Violin was given by Corey Cerovsek during the 1992-93 season. John Loughran guest-conducted. The great Mozart Requiem was conducted initially here during the summer Season of 1955 by Robert Shaw, and most recently by Julian Wachner, during the 2003-04 season.