

PROGRAM

ONE HUNDRED TWENTIETH SEASON

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Riccardo Muti Music Director

Pierre Boulez Helen Regenstein Conductor Emeritus

Yo-Yo Ma Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant

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Thursday, January 27, 2011, at 8:00

Friday, January 28, 2011, at 8:00

Saturday, January 29, 2011, at 8:00

Tuesday, February 1, 2011, at 7:30

Mitsuko Uchida Conductor and Piano

Music by Wolfgang Mozart

Piano Concerto No. 11 in F Major, K. 413

Allegro

Larghetto

Tempo di menuetto

Divertimento in B-flat Major, K. 137

Andante

Allegro di molto

Allegro assai

First Chicago Symphony Orchestra performances

INTERMISSION

Piano Concerto No. 21 in C Major, K. 467

[Allegro maestoso]

Andante

Allegro vivace assai

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra graciously salutes John Hart and Carol Prins for their generous support of the CSO through their commitment to the Center Stage Society.

CSO Tuesday series concerts are sponsored by United Airlines.

Steinway is the official piano of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

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Wolfgang Mozart

Born January 27, 1756, Salzburg, Austria.

Died December 5, 1791, Vienna, Austria.

Piano Concerto No. 11 in F Major, K. 413

Mozart arrived in Vienna a little before eight in the morning on March 16, 1781. He could not wait to escape the provincial atmosphere of Salzburg and the stifling presence of the man he knew as manager, teacher, critic, friend, mentor, and father. He wrote home to Leopold the day after he arrived; the letter is full of the empty chatter of a twenty-five-year-old determined to conquer the big city and excited to be on his own. Not one of Leopold's letters to his son from this period has survived, but we can tell from Wolfgang's replies, each carefully signed "Ever your most obedient son," that his father apparently felt totally abandoned and perhaps betrayed. They both recognized

that this break had altered their relationship forever.

Mozart was the greatest pianist of his time. Today his performances would be televised and posted on YouTube, but we don't know how Mozart looked as he sat at the keyboard—whether, for example, he leapt at the keys, as the movies suggest, with adolescent delight. In all the newspaper reports there is scarcely one line as revealing as Mozart's own about a colleague: "She stalks over the clavier with her long bony fingers in such an odd way." There are vivid remarks scattered throughout his letters about pianists who grimaced and flopped about while playing, or who distorted the music with a free-wheeling use of rubato, and he

COMPOSED

1782–83

FIRST PERFORMANCE

probably January 11, 1783, in Vienna, with the composer as soloist

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

February 26, 1952; Orchestra Hall; Myra Hess, piano, with Rafael Kubelik conducting

MOST RECENT

CSO PERFORMANCES

November 4, 1995; Orchestra Hall; Daniel Barenboim, conductor and piano

July 3, 2005; Ravinia Festival; Joseph Kalichstein, piano, with James Conlon conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

solo piano, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, strings

CADENZA

by Mozart

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

23 minutes

once advised his sister to play with “plenty of expression, taste, and fire.” That comment, and another phrase of his—“it should flow like oil”—argue that Mozart’s music should never sound mechanical, although that is what later generations made of it. Few musicians whose opinions we might still value have left us detailed descriptions of Mozart’s playing. Muzio Clementi, the famous pianist who was once pitted against Mozart in a contest, later recalled simply that he “had never heard anyone perform with such spirit and grace.”

Between 1782, the year after he moved to Vienna, and 1786, Mozart wrote fifteen piano concertos. This is an incredible outpouring of important music, and it corresponds precisely to Mozart’s heyday as a performer. These concertos were his main performing vehicles—also his primary source of income—and time has placed them among the crowning glories of all music. There is little else in all Mozart’s output, aside from the great operas, to compare with the magnificence, subtlety, and consistent brilliance of these scores, and in no other works did Mozart so ingeniously merge the symphonic, operatic, and chamber music styles into a uniquely personal language of expression.

On December 28, 1782, Wolfgang wrote to his father that he had finished a piano concerto (probably the one in A major, K. 414), and that, although he was swamped—“I have so much to do that often I do not know whether I am on my head or my heels”—he

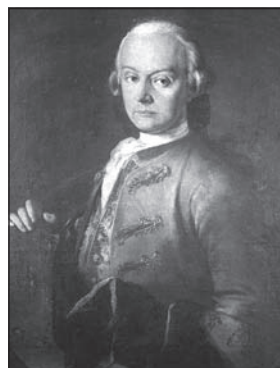
still had two more to complete for the 1783 Lenten concert series.

(From studying the paper he used, it seems clear that he worked on all three concertos simultaneously; he did not finish one before starting another.)

“These concertos,” he continued, “are a happy medium

between what is too easy and too difficult; they are very brilliant, pleasing to the ear, and natural, without being vapid. There are also passages here and there from which connoisseurs alone can derive satisfaction; but these passages are written in such a way that the less discriminating cannot fail to be pleased, though without knowing why.” Few composers since could, in all honesty, have said the same.

These three concertos were written shortly before *The Marriage of Figaro*, with which they share an almost unreasonable melodic wealth, and at the same time as the six string quartets Mozart dedicated to Haydn. They are as close to chamber music as one can imagine, in scale and intimacy of dialogue. In fact, Mozart advertised copies of the scores for sale—even before he finished writing the music—in versions that could be performed with one player to a string part and without



Mozart’s father, Leopold. Anonymous oil portrait, ca. 1765

any winds, as piano quintets. This may have been nothing more than a marketing ploy—"suitable for performing at home" the ad might read today—to attract the amateur musician and to help pay off the composer's snowballing debts. In any event, the scheme was not successful, despite Mozart's reducing the price from six to four ducats for the set (apparently at his father's insistence). The concertos, however, proved immediately popular in the concert hall. (They are among only six of the composer's piano concertos that were published during his lifetime.) As Donald Tovey wrote: "These concertos are small as the wild strawberry is small; they are no stunted growths, nor are they school-pieces of educational value; they are highly characteristic and mature masterpieces."

These three concertos find Mozart striving for a new clarity of language and a leanness and

subtlety of expression rarely found in his earlier music. The F major concerto, K. 413 is the most restrained, and arguably the most old-fashioned of the three. From its opening phrases, Mozart seems determined to win over his listeners with pure, natural charm. But the lilting, easy-going first movement also indicates how Mozart, virtually alone among his contemporaries, could say things of substance and weight in the *galant* and proper conversational style of the day. (The Allegro abounds in subtle touches; notice, for example, how the solo piano slips in almost unnoticed to enter the musical argument.) The soloist's part in the slow movement is a marvel of delicate, subtly ornamented melody. The finale is Mozart's last in the style and tempo of a courtly minuet. It is not a stirring, emphatic close, but a perfectly satisfying ending to an unusually gracious and elegant work. ■



Wolfgang Mozart

Divertimento in B-flat Major, K. 137

After returning to Salzburg from his extraordinarily successful, career-changing first tour of Italy, the young Mozart was barely home for five months before he and his father set off for Milan late in the summer of 1771. Italy had a wonderful effect on Wolfgang. He was introduced to new musical styles and exposed to new ideas—and, in the manner of a prodigy destined to fulfill his youthful promise, he absorbed them and made them his own. He received much of his musical education abroad and many of his early works were written on the road. By the time Mozart arrived back in Salzburg in December 1771, after his second Italian adventure, he had already begun to make his mark in the fields of opera, oratorio, symphony, and sonata, and he was poised to transform the piano concerto. And he was just fifteen years old.

Within a few weeks of his return to Salzburg, which seemed more provincial each time he came

home, Mozart composed three works for stringed instruments. The autographs are titled divertimentos, but the handwriting isn't Mozart's. It is possible that Mozart was thinking of just one player to a part, which would make these delightful scores early efforts at writing string quartets. (Mozart's first "official" string quartets were composed a few months later, as a cycle of six works.) Nevertheless, because of their divertimento designation and



Mozart in Verona. Formerly attributed to Felice Cignaroli, this oil portrait, painted early in January 1770 during the first Italian tour, is now known to have been by Saviero dalla Rosa. Mozart here is only a few weeks from his fourteenth birthday.

COMPOSED

1772

INSTRUMENTATION

strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

12 minutes

FIRST PERFORMANCE

unknown

These are the first CSO performances

their scoring for violins, violas, and *basses*, rather than the cellos of conventional string quartet makeup, they have most often been played by string orchestras.

The Divertimento in F major—the second in the set—has three movements, but in an unusual arrangement, with the slowest movement, a lovely *Andante*, placed before two faster ones. A typically Italian grace and charm pervade the entire piece, suggesting that the ideas for this music came

to Mozart—if they weren't in fact written down—while he was still in Milan.

It is possible that this is one of the quartets Leopold unsuccessfully peddled to the publishing house of Breitkopf and Härtel in February of 1772. The prestigious Viennese company's lack of interest in an unknown teenage composer is hardly surprising. In fact, during Mozart's lifetime, only some 130 of the 626 works in Köchel's catalog were printed and sold. ■

Symphony Center Information



The use of still or video cameras and recording devices is prohibited in Orchestra Hall.



Latecomers will be seated during designated program pauses.



Please use perfume, cologne, and all other scented products sparingly, as many patrons are sensitive to fragrance.



Please turn off or silence all personal electronic devices (pagers, watches, telephones, digital assistants).



Please note that Symphony Center is a smoke-free environment.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Note: Fire exits are located on all levels and are for emergency use only. The lighted Exit sign nearest your seat is the shortest route outdoors. Please walk—do not run—to your exit and do not use elevators for emergency exit.

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Wolfgang Mozart

Piano Concerto No. 21 in C Major, K. 467

Early in 1785, Leopold Mozart traveled to Vienna to check up on his already famous son, newly married (against his father's wishes) to Constanze Weber and at the peak of his popularity as a pianist and composer. Leopold reached Vienna on February 10, the same day Wolfgang entered a new piano concerto, in D minor, in his catalog, although when he arrived at one o'clock in the afternoon, as he wrote home to Wolfgang's sister, Nannerl, "the copyist was still copying . . . and your brother did not even have time to play through the Rondo." Wolfgang premiered the work at a concert that night. Leopold knew his son's life was hectic, and that he was giving concerts at a frantic pace—the previous March, Wolfgang had written of playing twenty-two concerts in

thirty-eight days ("I don't think that in this way I can possibly get out of practice," he quipped). But nothing had quite prepared him for the nonstop socializing, performing, and composing that he would witness during the next ten weeks.

Even a long and brutal cold spell, with heavy snowfall and temperatures so low that several people froze to death, didn't curtail Wolfgang's performing schedule (Leopold watched in amazement as his son's piano was carted out of the house to a concert nearly every other day). Their calendar was so packed with social engagements that Wolfgang and Constanze, like heads of state, were forced to accept different invitations for the same night. Shortly after Leopold's arrival, the Mozarts hosted an evening of chamber music, including

COMPOSED

March 9, 1785, entered in Mozart's catalog

FIRST PERFORMANCE

March 10, 1785, Vienna, with the composer as soloist

FIRST CSO

PERFORMANCE

January 28, 1932; Orchestra Hall; Walter Giesecking, piano, and Eric DeLamarter conducting

MOST RECENT

CSO PERFORMANCE

January 11, 2009; Orchestra Hall; Stephen Hough, piano, with Gustavo Dudamel conducting

INSTRUMENTATION

solo piano, one flute, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, strings

CADENZAS

by Mitsuko Uchida

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

29 minutes

performances of three of Mozart's new quartets dedicated to Haydn, attended by Haydn himself, who told Leopold that "your son is the greatest composer known to me either in person or by name," a tribute Leopold would proudly repeat verbatim in the months ahead. During the day, Wolfgang maintained his teaching schedule, with a steady stream of pupils showing up at the Mozarts' lavish, though disorderly lodgings. (Leopold eventually warmed to Constanze, but he never thought she was a



Mozart's wife Constanze. Oil portrait by Joseph Lange painted about 1782, Vienna

good housekeeper.)

Somehow, throughout this period, Mozart also managed to compose, with astonishing fluency and brilliance, as if the distractions of daily life stimulated

rather than inconvenienced him. During Leopold's first four weeks in Vienna, Wolfgang wrote this new piano concerto—in C major—hard on the heels of the D minor concerto. These two works, so close in time yet so different in substance and character, are among the glories of his output, and with them, Mozart seems to have created a new kind of concerto, more symphonic and closely argued than before. Leopold was in the audience for the premiere of this concerto, on March 10 (the day after Mozart entered it in his catalog), and, although it was well received, Leopold characteristically reported that Wolfgang took in 559 gulden, with little to say about the music itself.

There's a density of material in the opening movement of the C major concerto that mirrors the round-the-clock frenzy of Mozart's life at the time, except that the music is perfectly poised and masterfully organized. The entire movement is very broadly conceived; more than any of Mozart's earlier concertos, it has the majesty and vastness of his grandest symphonies. The solo piano doesn't enter boldly, with music the orchestra has already introduced, but hesitantly, ushered in by oboe, bassoon, and flute. The piano writing throughout is unusually inventive, rich in fancy figuration and aggressive in its dialogue with the orchestra. The development section focuses mostly on secondary material, because Mozart has already explored his main themes from so many different angles.

If the first movement is symphonic in scope, the second, in F major, is operatic, although there's no single aria of Mozart's that encompasses such an extraordinary range of emotions or explores so fearlessly the expressive world that lies beyond words. (It completely upstaged Bo Widerberg's pretty art-house film, *Elvira Madigan*, in the 1960s, at the same time winning countless new admirers for Mozart—and tempting concert and record promoters to include the name of the movie's heroine as if it were Mozart's subtitle.) This is one of Mozart's most profound and endlessly revealing works. In one seemingly unbroken arc, the piano traces a melody that floats over a quiet, pulsating accompaniment—rising and circling, plummeting

just once, like a great soprano voice, from high C to low A. (Later, the accompaniment stops for a single breathtaking moment, as if, by its silence, to call attention to a modulation to A-flat major.)

After such time-stopping music, the finale is, almost of necessity, a return to simpler, earthier pleasures. Like an operatic finale, it summarily dismisses recent difficulties and revelations. But it spares nothing in the way of spirit and wit, and, in the end, it stands as an ideal counterpart to the brilliance and beauty of what had come before. ■

Phillip Huscher is the program annotator for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.