

Symphony in C

Rossen Milanov, Music Director

Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia

Alan Harler, Artistic Director

Unfinished Masterpieces

Symphony No. 8 in B-minor (Unfinished) Franz Schubert

1. Allegro moderato
2. Andante con moto

Symphony in C

Rossen Milanov, conductor

Intermission

Requiem, K. 626 W. A. Mozart

- I. Introitus: Requiem
- II. Kyrie
- III. Sequentia
 1. Dies iræ
 2. Tuba mirum
 3. Rex tremendæ
 4. Recordare
 5. Confutatis
 6. Lacrimosa
- IV. Offertorium
 1. Domine Jesu Christe
 2. Hostias
- V. Sanctus
- VI. Benedictus
- VII. Agnus Dei
- VIII. Communio: Lux æterna

Alexandra Maksimova, soprano
Margaret Mezzacappa, mezzo-soprano
Zach Borichevsky, tenor
Scott Conner, bass

Symphony in C

Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia

Rossen Milanov, conductor

The Church of the Holy Trinity, Rittenhouse Square
Sunday, February 12, 2012, 7:30 pm

The audience is cordially invited to a reception in the narthex immediately following the concert to honor Mendelssohn Club alumni.

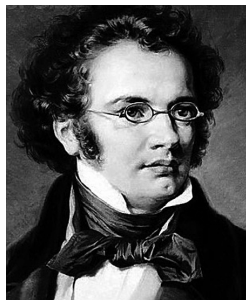
The use of recording or photographic equipment during this concert is strictly prohibited. Please turn off audible cell phones and alarms.

PROGRAM NOTES

Schubert Symphony No. 8 in B-Minor (Unfinished)

If anyone can be said to have lived to write music, it was Franz Schubert (1797-1828). While he often complained about the difficulty of composition, he could also write with exceptional speed and fluidity, often finishing one work and immediately beginning another. Although his life was tragically short, his compositional output was staggering: nearly 1000 works, including 9 symphonies, 6 masses, 21 piano sonatas, 15 string quartets, 7 singspiels, 9 operas, a melodrama, the incidental music for *Rosamunde*, overtures, chamber music, and more than 600 song settings.

He was born in Vienna, the son of a schoolmaster who gave him his first musical instruction. As a boy he auditioned for Salieri (Mozart's erstwhile rival, Antonio Salieri, now held the post of *kapellmeister* at the imperial court) and was accepted as a mezzo-soprano in the Hofkapelle singers. The appointment included a scholarship to the Imperial and Royal City College, where he played violin in the school orchestra and sometimes conducted. Although he later studied composition privately with Salieri, his instrumental training was haphazard at best and he



never developed a virtuoso technique. This hindered him in furthering his career as a composer, for as Mozart and Beethoven had demonstrated, the quickest route to success in Vienna was as a performer, which allowed you to feature your own compositions and arrange academies, or public performances. Lacking both the technique and the temperament for the relentless self promotion which drove Mozart and Beethoven, Schubert was unable to make a living as a composer. He taught in his father's school for a short time, but in his later years was supported almost exclusively by his circle of friends.

It was the poet Johann Mayrhofer who introduced Schubert to his "culture circle," a group of young men of artistic bent who lived a rather Bohemian lifestyle, holding court in the coffeehouses and taverns of Vienna. This provided Schubert not only with companionship, but also with important contacts that furthered his career. The baritone Johann Michael Vogl featured Schubert's songs in his recitals, including the first public performance of *Der Erlkönig*, which led to the publication of seven of his songs. Others championed his piano music or provided venues for private performances of his music. These events became known as Schubertiads and were grand affairs, often lasting through the night and keeping Schubert at the piano until he was exhausted. But it was through these private concerts that his music began to become widely known throughout Vienna.

Schubert composed his famous *Symphony No. 8 in B-minor* in 1822. He fully orchestrated the first two movements and some 20 bars of a scherzo. A full piano sketch of the scherzo exists, but he never completed the orchestration. In 1823, Schubert received an honorary diploma from the Styrian Music So-

ciety in Graz. In his acceptance letter, he mentioned a newly composed symphony, and dispatched the manuscript of the *B-minor Symphony* to his friend, the composer Anselm Hüttenbrenner, after first ripping out the pages with the incomplete scherzo. Hüttenbrenner, unaccountably, never forwarded the manuscript to the music society, and it lay in a drawer in his study for the next 42 years. A chance remark disclosed the existence of the symphony to the conductor Johann von Herbeck, who persuaded Hüttenbrenner to let him borrow the score. He presented the premiere of the work to great critical acclaim in December of 1865, some 37 years after the composer's death.

Schubert's *B-minor Symphony* is not his only unfinished work, and not even his only unfinished symphony, but it is the only one in which the extant movements are fully scored. There has been intense speculation about why Schubert never finished the work: illness (late in 1822 he contracted the syphilis which was eventually to take his life); overwork (at the time he was also working on two operas, the incidental music to the play *Rosamunde*, and the *Wanderer* fantasy); a reluctance to invite comparison to Beethoven; a fear that he could not sustain the remarkable character of the first two movements. There may be a grain of truth in this last explanation, for the *B-minor Symphony* was certainly unlike any of his previous symphonies. But the most likely explanation is the most prosaic: the 25 year old composer simply lost interest in the work and moved on.

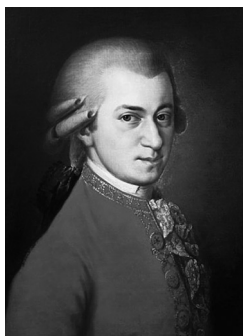
One is invariably struck by the wealth and beauty of the melodies which pervade the *B-minor Symphony*, but the work is highly original from a structural standpoint as well. The first movement opens with an introduction by the low strings, dark and foreboding. The first theme is a typically long, luscious Schubertian melody for clarinet and oboe, set over a murmuring string ostinato. The pizzicato of the low strings does not, as might be expected, outline the B-minor key of the work, B-F#-B, but rather B-G-B, creating a subtle but perceptible harmonic tension which tempers the beauty of the opening theme. The second theme is a syncopated, dance-like melody for the cellos, arriving in the very unorthodox key of G. It has a rather pastoral feeling, and does bear a slight resemblance to a melody Beethoven gives to the cellos in the final movement of his *Pastoral Symphony*. The introductory music appears again, but not merely as a bridge to the development section. It is given unusual prominence and in fact provides the bulk of the musical material in the development section. It resurfaces as the coda at the end of the movement. This unusual repetition of the introductory motive not only provides a strong unifying force but also reinforces the weight and gravity of the movement.

The second movement opens with one of Schubert's mostly hauntingly beautiful melodies, set for the violins over an equally beautiful countermelody in the low strings. The second theme shows Schubert's ability to create wonderfully compelling music from rather unpromising melodic material, in this case what is essentially a series of ascending thirds. The movement unfolds as a sort of rondo, with the themes alternating in variations. The beautiful opening melody has the last word, making some unusual harmonic stops along the way before quietly ending as the movement began.

Mozart Requiem, K. 626

There are few works in music which are as enshrouded in myth and legend as Mozart's *Requiem*. The anonymous commission, Mozart's sudden and untimely death while he was still working on the composition, and his morbid fantasy that he was writing the *Requiem* for himself is the stuff of legend and has been perpetuated by works as diverse as Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *Mozart and Salieri* and Peter Shaffer's brilliant but historically inaccurate play *Amadeus*.

Mozart was born in 1756 in Salzburg, where his father Leopold served as violinist and assistant *kapellmeister* at the archepiscopal court. Both he and his older sister were musical prodigies and Leopold lost no time in displaying their talents at courts throughout Europe. While these tours were financially successful, they did not yield what Leopold most wanted, the offer of a court position that might better suit the talented young musician. Thus it was that Mozart found himself in the employ of the Archbishop of Salzburg in the relatively minor positions of court composer and keyboard player. While the Archbishop kept a large musical establishment, he did not entertain lavishly, did not support the theater or opera, and placed strict limits on the length and content of liturgical music. Mozart chafed under these restrictions and performed his duties unenthusiastically, preferring instead to perform within the small circle of Salzburg nobility. In 1780, Mozart had received a commission to write an opera for the Hoftheater in Munich. *Idomeneo* proved to be a great success, and Mozart became convinced that his true calling was opera. He eventually found an excuse to leave the Archbishop's service, much against his father's wishes, and settled in Vienna, the center of the operatic world in the Austrian empire.



It was a very risky venture for Mozart to arrive in Vienna without any definite prospects. Most musicians of his caliber had court or church appointments that afforded them a regular salary. Mozart did have some reason to be optimistic, however. He was already well known as a pianist and composer and the Emperor Joseph II was not only a music patron but also a particular fan of Mozart's. The Emperor had just established a National Opera Theater and Mozart secured a commission to write an opera for the inaugural season. The *Abduction from the Seraglio* was only a modest success. After the premiere, Joseph II is supposed to have said to Mozart, "So many notes," to which Mozart is said to have replied "Precisely as many as required."

Mozart never obtained the posts of *kapellmeister* or director of the opera that he sought, but he nevertheless managed a very successful career as composer and performer, and by all accounts earned a considerable sum in fees and commissions. But he was completely undisciplined when it came to finances, spending lavishly when he had money and borrowing heavily when he did not. The late 1780's were a difficult time for Mozart. Austria had been en-

gaged in a disastrous war with the Ottoman Empire, and the wartime economy had offered him little opportunity to earn money. In addition, his wife Constanze had fallen ill and required expensive medical treatments at the mineral spas in Baden. But by 1791, he must have thought that his fortunes were about to improve. There was a new emperor and Mozart had been commissioned to write an opera for the coronation. He had finally obtained the promise of an appointment as *kapellmeister* at the Cathedral of St. Stephen. He had important commissions for a piano concerto, clarinet concerto, and his opera *The Magic Flute*. And then there was the *Requiem*.

The *Requiem* was commissioned anonymously, but with a substantial fee and the promise of a large bonus upon completion. The commissioner was one Count Walsegg-Stuppach, an amateur musician who intended the work as a memorial for his wife, who had died earlier that year. Walsegg was in the habit of commissioning works, copying them out in his own hand and having them performed. He would then ask if anyone could guess the composer, and would feign modesty when his guests suggested that he had written the works. Mozart accepted the commission, but repeatedly put off work on the *Requiem* to accommodate his other projects. He began serious work on the *Requiem* in the fall of 1791, but his health had already begun to fail. Exhausted by the rigors of his schedule, he suffered a relapse of the rheumatic fever that he had survived as a child and took to his bed. He continued working on the *Requiem*, discussing its construction with his students and even rehearsing some of the completed movements. Mozart grew steadily weaker, in no small measure due to the ministrations of his physicians, who prescribed repeated bleedings, and he died on Dec. 5, 1791, leaving the *Requiem* unfinished. Constanze engaged his student Franz Xaver Süssmayr to complete the score, and the *Requiem* was finally performed in 1792 in a benefit concert arranged by Mozart's sometime patron Baron van Swieten. Constanze also sold the rights to Mozart's publishers. Walsegg was furious and threatened a lawsuit. He eventually was able to conduct a performance of the work he had commissioned in 1793.

At the time of his death, Mozart had completed the *Introitus* and sketched out the vocal lines and orchestration for the *Kyrie*, *Sequentia* (up through the beginning of the *Lacrimosa*) and *Offertorium*. He had discussed the planned re-use of material from the *Introitus* and *Kyrie* in the *Communio* with Süssmayr. Süssmayr may also have used other material of Mozart's in the *Agnus Dei*, *Benedictus* and *Osanna* of the *Sanctus*, which rise to a level that his other music never achieved. The only music that seems unambiguously to be Süssmayr's is the *Sanctus* itself. In 1971, the musicologist Franz Beyer reorchestrated the score to correct what he felt were particularly egregious musical errors introduced by Süssmayr, and it is this reconstruction which is being performed this evening.

Despite his years of service to the Archbishop of Salzburg, Mozart had written very little sacred music. He had the opportunity to study the music Bach from manuscripts in van Swieten's collection, and the *Requiem* shows Bach's influence, especially noticeable in the strongly chromatic flavor of the choral writing and the frequent use of fugues. The *Introitus* opens with an orches-

tral melody that conveys both nobility and solemnity. The principal theme is usually played by a clarinet today, but Mozart actually specified the basset horn, a relative of the clarinet but with a darker and more plaintive tone. The *Kyrie* is set as a complex double fugue with the *Kyrie eleison* text as the first subject and the *Christe eleison* text as the contrasting second subject, brilliantly disguising the three-fold symmetry of the underlying prayer.

The *Sequentia* is the most characteristic prayer of the requiem mass, a 13th century poem which intersperses graphic depictions of the Day of Judgment with pleas for mercy and salvation. Mozart takes full advantage of the dramatic potential of the *Sequentia*. There is an almost theatrical drama and tension, with frequent and abrupt changes in dynamic, tempo and mood. There are marked contrasts between the driving rhythms of the *Dies iræ* and *Confutatis* themes and the moving, plaintive *voca me* (call me to be among the blessed) and *salva me* (save me) music. He also takes the opportunity for some exquisite musical imagery: the quavering bass line on the text *quantus tremor est futururus* (how great will the trembling be) and the falling tears in the orchestration of the *Lacrimosa*. He carries this imagery into the *Offertorium* as well: the unison octaves of the open lion's mouth for the text *de ore leonis* (deliver them from the lion's mouth) and the wonderfully angular melody for the text *ne absorbeat eas tartarus* (let them not be swallowed up by hell; let them not be cast into the abyss.) And in a final, wonderful touch, Mozart reprises the opening music in the *Communio*, creating not only a sense of unity in the music but also a sense of completeness.

– Michael Moore

Program notes copyright © 2012 Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia. All rights reserved.