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S E L E C T I O N

## CARNEGIE HALL presents

Sunday, December 24, 2006, at 7 PM  
Isaac Stern Auditorium / Ronald O. Perelman Family Stage

### NEW YORK STRING ORCHESTRA

JAIME LAREDO, *Conductor and Violist*

JENNIFER KOH, *Violin*

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- WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791) Overture to *The Impresario*, K. 486 (1786)
- Sinfonia concertante* in E-flat Major, K. 364 (1779–80)
- I. Allegro maestoso
  - II. Andante
  - III. Presto
- JENNIFER KOH, *Violin*  
JAIME LAREDO, *Viola*
- Symphony No. 36 in C Major, K. 425, "Linz" (1783)
- I. Adagio—Allegro spiritoso
  - II. Andante
  - III. Menuetto—Trio
  - IV. Finale: Presto

*This concert is made possible, in part, by an endowment fund for young artists established by Stella and Robert Jones.*

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# CARNEGIE HALL



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# THE CONCERT At a Glance

**T**onight we hear three delightful works by Mozart, each of which highlights the versatility of the composer's genius. The Overture to *The Impresario*, with its stylized Classical gestures, almost seems to poke fun at the musical practices of Mozart's day. True to his love for opera, Mozart imbues the solo violin and viola parts in the *Sinfonia concertante* with vocal characteristics resembling that of a soprano and mezzo-soprano. Very much aware of his musical forbearers, the young master pays homage to Haydn in the slow movement of the "Linz" Symphony while truly making it his own sublime creation. Like a poet, Mozart gives to his music a richness of meaning above and beyond the notes in the score.

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# Notes ON THE PROGRAM

BY CODY FRANCHETTI

## WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART Overture to *The Impresario*, K. 486

Born January 27, 1756, in Salzburg, Austria; died December 5, 1791, in Vienna.

Completed on February 3, 1786, *The Impresario* was first performed on February 7, 1786, in the Orangery of Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna. It received its US premiere at Carnegie Hall on December 18, 1904, with the New York Symphony Orchestra conducted by Walter Damrosch.

Scoring: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, and strings.

Performance time: approximately 5 minutes.

In the weeks following the last performance of the *Abduction from the Seraglio*, Mozart's irrepressible desire for composing operas showed no signs of waning. As his letters from this period show, he flooded theater directors with proposals and inducements to pursue new operatic productions. In these revealing letters, Mozart wrangled with administrators about the importance of preserving German opera as a national fixture. But it was a losing battle. The directors' objections to German opera were not without foundation. Mediocre productions, substandard artistic merit, and internal quarrels exasperated them and undermined the survival of the Singspiel—that operatic hybrid, popular in Germany and Austria, in which songs and choruses alternate with spoken dialogue. In fact, by the end of the 1781–82 theatrical season, the German opera guild was suppressed. In the following years, periodic revival attempts proved unsuccessful; it seemed as if

Italian opera had triumphed over its native rival in the struggle for operatic dominance in Vienna.

Despite the success of the *Abduction*, Mozart was not commissioned to write another opera for four years. The command finally came in early 1786 while Mozart was already working on *The Marriage of Figaro* with Lorenzo Da Ponte. The occasion was a party at the Orangery of Schönbrunn Palace on February 7, 1786, given by Emperor Joseph II in honor of his brother-in-law, Prince Albert of Saxony, whom the emperor greatly liked. The Orangery—with its orange trees disposed in ample rows (in strict imitation of those ordered by Louis XIV at Versailles) and its plump fruits in the tart winter air—made a sensually disciplined setting for the royal beneficence.

Entertainment consisted of a sort of match between Italian and German opera. Salieri, the victorious defender

of Italian style, was to compose the music of a work by the librettist Giovanni Battista Casti, Da Ponte's arch-rival. The Teutonic contender would be *The Impresario*, with music by Mozart and words by Gottlieb Stephanie Jr., the librettist for *The Abduction*. It is ironic that the title of Salieri's opera—*Prima la musica e poi le parole* ("First the music, then the words")—was a summary of the very issue that a generation before had been at the center of a vitriolic polemic in France in which the supporters of French music condemned Italian opera for its literary mindlessness, while the French defenders of Italian music extolled its Mediterranean spontaneity and melodic ease.

*The Impresario* is a satire based on the comic struggles between an impresario and his second-rate prima donnas as he tries to form a touring company. The uninspired, facile plot makes this a decidedly minor work,

## WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART *Sinfonia concertante* in E-flat Major, K. 364

Written in 1779–80, the *Sinfonia concertante* received its Carnegie Hall premiere on March 18, 1916, with Anton Witek, violin; Emile Ferir, viola; and the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Karl Muck.

Scoring: 2 oboes, 2 horns, and strings.

Performance time: approximately 30 minutes.

Mozart was dismissed from service by the notorious Archbishop of Salzburg the first time in 1777. In fact, both he and his father Leopold were fired, but, mostly due to financial considerations, it was Mozart and his mother who traveled through Europe in search of a firm and lucrative post.

but Mozart's music rises above the limitations of his libretto. The overture is in sound sonata-allegro form. Its common harmonic scheme and placid thematic composure have been defined by the noted Mozart scholar Hermann Abert as parodistic. In fact, the exaggerated cadenza before the second theme and the generally straightforward conduct of the whole recall caricatured methods Mozart used in his *Musical Joke*, K. 522. The *Impresario* Overture's reverberant theme, played in unison by the woodwinds and violins, and the stereotypical succession of *forte* and *piano*, almost seem to deride the musical practices of the day.

A series of legato-staccato figurations in the second group provide a jocosity that again seems to lean toward mockery although they are resolved by a tender, animated closing theme. This is subtle humor meant to delight the nimble-witted.

In October they arrived in Mannheim, a rich, bustling capital of the independent Palatinate state, boasting a formidable musical life and the best and largest orchestra in Europe. Influenced by the musical currents of the city, Mozart, however, did not find the lucrative opportunities he had hoped for, so he moved

on to Paris in the spring of 1778. An even more unfortunate calamity awaited Mozart there: the death of his mother in July. Reluctantly, Mozart returned to Salzburg in 1779 and assumed the position of court organist. At this time he wrote the *Sinfonia concertante*.

His travels had influenced him distinctively: though he hated French music, he was awed by the ability of the Mannheim players. The *Sinfonia concertante* was a response to the creative possibilities opened to him in the Palatine city. Surely, the so-called Mannheim school, whose typical stylistic feature was its formidable dynamic effects, had influenced Mozart while composing the piece. But a lesser known factor to which K. 364 probably owes its birth is Mozart's predilection for the viola. Reportedly, Mozart was most fond of the viola's "middle harmonies," and it was he who played the viola part in the first performance of his six quartets dedicated to Haydn. The special configuration of his string quintets, too, shows Mozart's favoring of the viola: 2 violins, 2 violas, and cello. (Boccherini, who is considered the father of the string quintet, wrote 125 quintets—out of which only 13 have doubled viola parts like Mozart's).

Conceived in the tradition of the late-Baroque *concerto grosso*, the *Sinfonia concertante* is one of the earlier works by Mozart that led to the great creations of his mature period.

The first movement's opening chords are at once majestic and dignified. Intensely classical in style, the opening

orchestral exposition employs typical devices of the era. The crescendo on an ascending trill in the violins was a compositional technique frequently used by Stamitz and other Mannheim composers of the period; but Mozart exaggerates this device and uses it on an unprecedented scale.

When the soloists enter, the movement becomes less symphonic as the principal violin and viola engage in an extraordinary exchange: they imitate, thwart, chase, and join each other in a dizzying dialogue, which recalls the *Rococo* style of the Concerto for Flute and Harp, K. 299, written in Paris a few months before. This soloistic preponderance has been criticized by some for being too virtuosic and not fully integrated with the orchestra. These critics failed to understand the peculiar aesthetics of the *Sinfonia concertante*—unlike Beethoven and Brahms, who were both influenced by the work. (Think of Beethoven's Triple Concerto or Brahms's Double Concerto.)

The *Andante* is full of deep seriousness and has the pathos of Mozart's piano concertos. Opera, too, inspires the work overall as the two solo lines resemble that of a soprano and a mezzo-soprano. The cadenza in this movement further highlights the vocal aspect of the work, with its decorated passages in sixths and thirds.

The last movement is more conventional but not less inspired. Again, the soloists are predominant, but their parts exhibit subtle contrapuntal displays easily overshadowed by the movement's brilliant sparkle.

## WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART Symphony No. 36 in C Major, K. 425, "Linz"

Written in 1783, *Symphony No. 36* received its Carnegie Hall premiere on December 17, 1904, with the New York Symphony Orchestra conducted by Frank Damrosch.

Scoring: 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, and strings.

Performance time: 26 minutes.

At Linz, Mozart wrote to his father, "On Tuesday, November 4, I am giving a concert in the theater here, and as I have not a single symphony with me, I am writing a new one at break-neck speed, which must be finished by that time."

The circumstances in 1783 that led Mozart to write the C-Major Symphony were slight, but the results supreme—for the "Linz" shows the progress of Mozart's stylistic transformation, which had begun the year before with his study of the compositions of Handel and J. S. Bach. Mozart's incorporation of the learned *stile antico* had been imitative at first, but eventually synthesized within his personal style. Recognized as early as the 19th century, these two distinct stylistic phases reveal Mozart's astonishing capacity for assimilation.

The "Linz" is the first of Mozart's symphonies with a slow introduction. By enlarging the scale of the first movement, the introduction conveys a sense of grandeur that his previous symphonies did not display, and though brief (only 19 measures), it carries the listener through a variety of unusual sonorities and shifting harmonies.

The first theme—dynamic and spirited—begins softly but is immediately repeated by the whole orchestra in a loud fanfare. The representation of previously heard material is in fact a recurring device of the first movement. Most notable is the incursion of the second theme in minor and its haunting echo by the woodwinds. The expanded closing section of the exposition is ingeniously quoted in the development.

The *Andante* is one of Mozart's great slow movements. The overall sonority prefigures the noble serenity of the Countess's arias in *The Marriage of Figaro*. The movement's theme is actually a quotation from the slow movement of Haydn's Quartet in F Minor, Op. 20, No. 4 (same key, motive, rhythm, and harmony)—an affirmation of the admiration Mozart had for the senior composer.

The *Menuetto*, too, has distinctly Haydn-esque syncopations, though the *Trio*'s melody in the oboe and bassoon has a more archaic—even doltish—charm.

The last movement is in sonata form; its brilliance, unlike the first movement, derives from the masterly manipulation of the movement's themes—seemingly effortless in Mozart-like style.

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