

Peter Oundjian, conductor
Lars Vogt, piano

Saturday, March 2, 2019 at 8:00pm
Sunday, March 3, 2019 at 3:00pm

MOZART

(1756-1791)

Piano Concerto No. 21 in C major, K. 467 (1785)

Allegro

Andante

Allegro vivace assai

Lars Vogt, piano

INTERMISSION

MAHLER

(1860-1911)

Symphony No. 9 (1909-1910)

Andante comodo

Im Tempo eines gemächlichen Ländlers. Etwas
täppisch und sehr derb

Rondo-Burleske. Allegro assai. Sehr trotzig

Adagio. Sehr langsam und noch zurückhaltend

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The 2018/2019 Classical Series is presented by **World Wide Technology** and **The Steward Family Foundation**.

These concerts are presented by **FleishmanHillard**.

Peter Oundjian is the **Edna W. Sternberg Guest Conductor**.

Lars Vogt is the **Monsanto Guest Artist**.

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The concert of Sunday, March 3, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from **Marjorie M. Ivey**.

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PROGRAM NOTES

BY TIM MUNRO

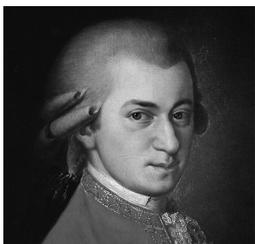
Two composers, born a century apart. Both raised outside Vienna, but both deeply associated with the city's musical life. Mozart struggled for a decade to survive as a freelancer there, while Mahler came to resent its inhabitants' conservative taste and virulent antisemitism.

Two composers, whose music is as different as chalk and cheese. Mozart's Piano Concerto K. 467 is jeweled perfection, with hummable melodies and a jaunty final movement that sends listeners to intermission with a spring in their step.

Mahler's Ninth Symphony, on the other hand, is a sprawling, rugged, imperfect universe. It embraces life, death, youth, and love; it celebrates the sacred and the secular, the sublime and the ridiculous.

But Mahler dearly loved the music of Mozart. As a conductor, he helped put Mozart's operas at the core of the repertoire, and Mahler's Fourth Symphony is something of a musical love-letter to the long-dead composer.

Do we hear echoes, parallels? In the Viennese beauty of their melodies, in the dance rhythms that are never far away? Or do we hear the sounds of Mahler bidding farewell to nostalgia for Mozart's Vienna, as Europe edged slowly towards an uncertain future.



WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Born January 27, 1756, Salzburg, Austria

Died December 5, 1791, Vienna, Austria

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

Leopold Mozart arrived in Vienna on a freezing day in 1785. He had come to visit his son, Wolfgang. Leopold, himself a musician, was worried: Wolfgang had left stable employment for the bright lights and an uncertain future in this cultural capital.

What he found was a man in demand. Wolfgang was building a lucrative freelance career, catering to Vienna's rich. He was overwhelmed with work, dashing from concert to wig-fitting to party to concert. He was presenting his own subscription concerts, a risk that was paying off.

On March 10, Leopold entered Vienna's grand Burgtheater. He sat proudly (and no doubt stoically) in the packed hall, waiting to hear Wolfgang's newest piano concerto, completed just one day prior. The audience was abuzz with talk of the young Mozart, still in his twenties.

Leopold had long taught his son to write music not just for connoisseurs but also musical newcomers. "Do not forget the so-called 'popular style,' which tickles



The Mozarts: Wolfgang Amadeus, Maria Anna (his sister), and Leopold.
Portrait by Johann Nepomuk della Croce.

long ears,” he wrote. Wolfgang listened: the concerto Leopold heard that day in the Burgtheater welcomed all listeners.

The first movement unfolds a drama full of characters and conflict and incident. Strings enter tentatively; woodwinds rebuke them; the two sides are soon caught in argument. Later, the piano acts as participant, as antagonist, as peacemaker. The tone of the musical conversation keeps shifting: fractious to calm to jaunty.

Mozart’s famous slow movement begins with a musical miracle. Hushed violins unfold a melody that is both simple and complex. It strikes our heart, yet is a parade of contradictions: a floated opening; dramatic swoops; sighing sadness; a peaceful end. Somehow both immaculate and very human.

The third movement revels in Leopold’s “popular style.” Skipping strings, perky woodwinds, and boisterous fanfares tickle our ears as it would have tickled those of Leopold and his neighbors in the Burgtheater.

Father and son had a fractious relationship; they would later fall out painfully. But at this moment, with this concerto, perhaps the two found a temporary understanding, an uneasy truce.

First Performance March 10, 1785, Vienna

First SLSO Performance December 11, 1942, Vladimir Golschmann conducting with Robert Casadesus as soloist

Most Recent SLSO Performance November 14, 2009, Sir Andrew Davis conducting with Robert Levin as soloist

Scoring solo piano, flute, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, and strings

Performance Time approximately 29 minutes



GUSTAV MAHLER

Born July 7, 1860, Kaliště, Czech Republic

Died May 18, 1911, Vienna, Austria

Symphony No. 9

Movement 1: *Andante comodo* (“At a comfortable walking pace”)

Out of the silence, a heartbeat stutters. A distant horn call rustles the strings. Then—tentatively, so tentatively—a melody begins...



Alma Mahler with her and Gustav's two daughters, Maria and Anna.

Farewell

Gustav Mahler knew death. As a child he lost six brothers, and just two years before working on the Ninth Symphony he suffered his deepest pain: Maria, his eldest daughter, died.

Mahler himself felt vulnerable. Diagnosed with a serious heart condition, he could no longer rest and recharge on long walks in the woods. He knew his life would be cut short.

Two sounds draw us into the Ninth Symphony. The first: cellos and french horn playing a fragile heartbeat, perhaps Mahler's own. As the movement cycles through surges of love, optimism, and desire, this heartbeat comes back again and again, cutting off hope. A shadow of death, always close.

The second: a simple melody, filled with nostalgia. Every element of this melody will be severed, altered, and transformed during this movement, creating a universe of emotions. Its first two sighing notes are borrowed from a piano sonata by Beethoven with the subtitle *Les Adieux* (“The farewell”). Indeed, we can sing the word “fare-well” to this gesture.

At the movement's climax, the orchestra tumbles into an oblivion of four trombones, crying to the heartbeat figure at the top of their lungs. The music collapses, fading slowly until the end of the movement. On an early draft, Mahler wrote over the last page, “Farewell! Farewell!”

Movement 2: *Im Tempo eines gemächlichen Ländlers. Etwas täppisch und sehr derb.* (“At the pace of a leisurely dance. Somewhat clumsy and very rough.”)

A summer's market day in the square. Violas and bassoon tune up their instruments; a band of clarinets practice a difficult lick. A band of fiddle players start up a catchy melody.



The town square of Iglau (now Jihlava).

Dancing

In the Germanic village of Iglau (now Jihlava in the Czech Republic), music came alive in the town square. Bands from across the region played for the crowds gathered on busy market days.

And young Mahler listened. This serious, quiet boy, head always stuck in a book, imitated the songs and dances on his toy accordion.

Mahler answers the first movement's pain of "farewell" with a second movement that is full of musical memories of youth. We are thrust right into Mahler's buzzing town square. Dance melodies compete for attention, interrupting each other, playing over each other.

The four melodies:

- **A slow *ländler*.** In this traditional Austrian dance, couples turn around one another with small steps, executing complicated hand holds.
- **Two fast waltzes.** The first waltz takes our breath away with its speed, force, and strange harmonies. The second is more dangerous, terrifying us with its buzzsawing brass and squealing winds.
- **An even slower *ländler*.** This dance is the calm in the storm. Its melody evokes the first movement's sighing gesture of farewell, and the music finally rises to heartfelt passion.

Early commentators on the symphony referred to the "senseless brutalities" of this music, to the "noisy" sound of the instruments. But can we also hear in Mahler's music some of the joyful discovery of youth?

Movement 3: *Rondo. Burleske. Allegro assai. Sehr trotzig.* (“Very lively. Very defiant.”)

Three groups eye each other across a schoolyard. The trumpet fires the first insult; the strings respond. Woodwinds join with their own taunt.

Mockery

“Burlesque” is where serious and silly meet. The word comes from the Italian *burla*, meaning “joke,” and the Latin *burra*, meaning “a triviality.” Historically, this was a chance to make fun of something serious: Shakespeare mocking sentimental tragedies, Cervantes parodying medieval romances.

For Mahler, the comic and the serious had always been bedfellows. When, at an early age, this Jewish child was bored at temple, he stood up and sang a bawdy secular song. Later, one of his earliest compositions was a light *polka* dance introduced by a funeral march.

The third movement is deadly serious. Mahler asks for the music to be played in a “defiant” manner: instruments are rude and raucous, certain they are correct. The resulting musical melee bludgeons any sense of “farewell” with sheer brute force.

But the third movement is also deadly *silly*. Mahler mocks a “serious and high-minded” musical form, the *fugue*, by layering so many melodies at such a speed that it risks collapsing under its own weight. Contemporaries thought the music sounded like a “threat” to conservative values.

For one magical moment the sky clears. A trumpet plays a quiet melody, surrounded by a trembling halo; we feel the warmth of the sun. It can’t last. A clarinet snarls, things fall apart. The burlesque must continue!

Movement 4: *Adagio. Sehr langsam und noch zurückhaltend.* (“Very slow and held back.”)

Violins strain to reach notes on their lowest string. Defeated, they sink slowly into the warm embrace of the whole string section.



Alma Schindler around the time she met Gustav Mahler.

Alma

They were mis-matched from the start. Gustav, a quiet, bookish “intellectual,” comfortable in solitude. Alma, a cosmopolitan, at home in a crowd. Each an independent spirit, each dreaming of life as a composer.

But in early 1900s Vienna, ambition was possible for only one of them. “You must become ‘what I need’ if we are to be happy together,” wrote Gustav to his wife. He commanded her to quit composition, to think only of *his* career.

Alma gave in, but by 1909, when Mahler began work on his Ninth Symphony, the marriage was at its lowest point. He lost himself in work. “Over the years I have forgotten how to do anything else,” he wrote.

In a draft of the Ninth Symphony, Mahler scrawled, “Oh love! Obliterated!”

The fourth movement sinks into the arms of a lower key, D flat major. This key mutes the brightness of the strings: if the first movement's D major is an electric bulb, then the fourth movement's D flat major is candlelight.

But there is something else in this music. At the very end of the symphony, Mahler quotes music from his own song, "Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen" ("I am lost to the world"). The Rückert poem he set ends with these words:

I am dead to the world's tumult,
And I rest in a quiet realm!
I live alone in my heaven,
In my love and in my song.

The music of the fourth movement again and again tries to pull away from its roots, to float to a "quiet realm." Early on, a violin note (played "without emotion") floats high above contrabassoon and double bass, rumbling in the depths.

Perhaps with this symphony Mahler is ultimately asking: How do we say farewell? Do we look at what we've lost with tears and nostalgia? Do we resist it with anger? Or do we find an answer in acceptance, in living alone "in my heaven, in my love and in my song?"

First Performance June 26, 1912, Vienna, Bruno Walter conducting the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

First SLSO Performance December 2, 1971, Walter Susskind conducting

Most Recent SLSO Performance November 22, 2008, David Robertson conducting

Scoring 4 flutes, piccolo, 4 oboes (4th doubling English horn), 3 clarinets, bass clarinet, E-flat clarinet, 4 bassoons (4th doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, 2 timpani, percussion (glockenspiel, tam tam, snare drum, cymbals, bass drum, 3 deep bells), harp, and strings

Performance Time approximately 1 hour and 21 minutes

What Next?

In 1908, when Mahler wrote much of his Ninth Symphony, music was splintering.



Arnold
Schoenberg

Some composers looked to strange new worlds:

- In Germany, **Arnold Schoenberg's** String Quartet No. 2 pushed music to the edge of a precipice. In the final movement, a soprano sings, "I feel air from another planet."
- In America, **Charles Ives** was posing *The Unanswered Question* with the help of three groups that follow their own leader.



Sergei
Rachmaninoff

Some music looked back to a different time:

- In Russia, **Sergei Rachmaninoff** had recently completed his Symphony No. 2, a work of sumptuous, rich, dark melodies.
- In England, **Edward Elgar's** Symphony No. 1 was a huge hit. Within weeks of its premiere, its noble melodies had been heard around the world.



Enrico
Caruso

In New York, Tin Pan Alley was in full swing. With the invention of the gramophone, popular music was spreading fast:

- "**Take Me Out to the Ball Game**" topped the charts. Ironically, its two songwriters had never attended a baseball game before writing the song.
- **Enrico Caruso** was at the height of his fame. His recordings of opera arias were heard on wax cylinders across the globe.



Dame Ethel
Smyth

What of Mahler's female contemporaries, mostly unheralded in their time?

- In England, **Dame Ethel Smyth** was fighting for women's suffrage. She was also fighting for her music to be heard, with occasional success: her opera *Der Wald* was for 100 years the only opera by a woman staged at the Metropolitan Opera.
- In 1908, the French composer **Cécile Chaminade** received a hero's welcome in the United States, thanks to the popularity of piano works. Sadly, these would soon fade from memory.
- In Austria, Gustav's wife **Alma Mahler** would soon recommence song composition, freed from her husband's restrictions after his death in 1911. A song like "Die stille Stadt" gives a sense of her searching harmonies.



Peter Oundjian on Mahler's Ninth Symphony

From an interview with the Yale School of Music

Mahler 9 is a farewell. It's the end of the Romantic period, the end of the nineteenth century. We can even think of it as the final statement in what we might call the traditional language of classical music.

It's also a farewell to all of his losses, and he'd lost so much by that time. He'd just lost his daughter; he had this heart arrhythmia — there's kind of a description of that uneven heartbeat at the opening. You are in between fear and terror and great tenderness, a struggle to understand the meaning of life and the meaning of love, particularly.

He's [also] taking you on a journey of contradiction. He had so many areas in which he was conflicted. Is he a conductor? Is he a composer? Is he cosmopolitan? Is he provincial? All these things tore him apart his whole life. His religion and hiding the fact that he was Jewish — so many things created this feeling of enormous conflict inside him.

I approach this [work] a little bit like a director approaches a play. I think [musicians] should come with some understanding of their role. Mahler was the greatest dramatist of any composer. Maybe that's because he conducted opera his whole life, and he knew what an orchestra could do, and he had such an incredible sense of what an orchestra *could* do, and then he took that and did even more with it.

One of the things I value most about being on stage is the amount of risk. And that can be risk of great virtuosity and the risk of making yourself open and vulnerable to very profound and tragic kind of feelings.

There is nothing we can compare to an experience of Mahler 9. It brings people together, especially in its ultimate moments, in a way that no other piece can achieve.



PETER OUNDJIAN

Edna W. Sternberg Guest Conductor.

Recently named conductor emeritus of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Peter Oundjian has been hailed as a masterful and dynamic presence in the conducting world. Oundjian has developed a multi-faceted portfolio as a conductor, violinist, professor, and artistic advisor. He has been celebrated for his musicality, an eye towards collaboration, innovative programming, and an engaging personality.

Oundjian's 14-year tenure as music director of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra has been marked by a reimagining of the TSO's programming, international stature, audience development, touring and a number of outstanding recordings. Credited for his long association with the orchestra, Oundjian helped establish the TSO as one of the world's top ensembles and served as a major creative force for the city of Toronto. Oundjian led the orchestra on several international tours, to Europe and the USA, and he conducted the first performance by a North American orchestra at Reykjavik's Harpa Hall in 2014.

Since 2012, Oundjian has served as Music Director of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra during which time he implemented the kind of collaborative programming that has become a staple of his directorship. Oundjian led the RSNO on several international tours, including North America, China, and a European festival tour with performances at the Bregenz Festival, the Dresden Festival as well as in Innsbruck, Bergamo, Ljubljana, and others. His final appearance with the orchestra as their Music Director will be at the 2018 BBC Proms where he conducts Britten's epic *War Requiem* and closes his six-year tenure with the orchestra.



LARS VOGT

Monsanto Guest Artist

Lars Vogt has established himself as one of the leading musicians of his generation. Born in the German town of Düren in 1970, he first came to public attention when he won second prize at the 1990 Leeds International Piano Competition and has enjoyed a varied career for over 25 years. His versatility as an artist ranges from the core classical repertoire of Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, and Brahms to the romantics Grieg, Tchaikovsky, and Rachmaninov through to the dazzling Lutosławski concerto.

Vogt is now increasingly working with orchestras as a conductor and in September 2015 took up his post as Music Director of Royal Northern Sinfonia at Sage Gateshead. As a conductor, Vogt has also worked with many leading orchestras, including the Cologne and Zurich Chamber Orchestras, Camerata Salzburg, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, Rundfunk Sinfonie Orchester Berlin, and Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

During his prestigious career, Vogt has performed with many of the world's great orchestras including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Santa Cecilia Orchestra, Berliner Philharmoniker, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Bayerischer Rundfunk Munich, Staatskapelle Dresden, Wiener Philharmoniker, London Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Symphony, and NHK Symphony.

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slo.org/recordings

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Avoid traffic and parking before our Coffee Concerts. Hop aboard our SLSO Shuttle and enjoy a Q&A with a retired SLSO musician on the ride to Powell Hall. Shuttle tickets are \$15 per passenger, per concert. The motor coach departs the St. Louis County Library Headquarters (1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd) promptly at 9:15am and returns by 1:30pm. All passengers must have both a Shuttle and Coffee Concert ticket.

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