

Program Notes

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Symphony No. 33, K. 319 in B flat major by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

From August, 1777 to July 1778, Mozart traveled with his mother to Mannheim, Munich and Paris, seeking new musical opportunities. Mozart had grown weary of working for the archbishop in his hometown of Salzburg, and was eager to find a permanent position elsewhere. Tragedy struck when his mother died unexpectedly in Paris on July 3, 1778, and Mozart was forced to return to Salzburg in January of 1779. The Symphony No. 33, K. 319 in B flat major is the second symphony that Mozart completed after his return; it was finished on July 9, 1779. Jolly, playful and charming, the symphony gives little indication of Mozart's difficult circumstances during this time. Lightly scored for two oboes, two bassoons, two horns and strings, it has a chamber music quality that highlights Mozart's skill in orchestration.

The opening movement is in triple meter, with the feel of a light-hearted Viennese waltz. The form is unusual in that new material is introduced during the development section, including a four note motive (F, G, B flat, A) that reappears in the finale of Mozart's *Jupiter* Symphony.

The Andante movement in E flat major contains a "mirror image" recapitulation, in which the secondary theme reappears before the first. This structure was often used by composers in Mannheim, which Mozart had recently visited during his ill-fated trip. Once again, new musical ideas appear in the development section, including a version of the four note "Jupiter" motive.

The Minuet and Trio were added in 1782, when the symphony was performed in Vienna. Since Viennese audiences were accustomed to symphonies in four movements, Mozart composed this gracious movement to please his audience. The symphony concludes with a sparkling finale in sonata form, reminiscent of the high-spirited energy of Mozart's later operas. Once again, Mozart introduces new musical ideas in the development section: the motive F, C, B flat, and A, which is strikingly similar to the "Jupiter" motive that is present in the development sections of the first and second movements.

This symphony was published by Artaria in Vienna in 1785 as Op. 7, No. 2, along with Mozart's Symphony No. 35 in D major, K. 385 ("Haffner"). It is one of only a few Mozart symphonies that were published during his lifetime. Mozart composed just one more symphony in Salzburg, No. 34, K. 338 in C major, before moving permanently to Vienna in 1781.

Symphony No. 4 in E flat major, 'Romantic' by Anton Bruckner

Music historian K. Marie Stolba described Anton Bruckner as ". . . a quiet person, deeply religious, intelligent, sincere, trusting, and sometimes naïve. He was often filled with self-doubt and insecurity, though he was an excellent musician and a craftsman composer." Bruckner was born in Anselden, Austria, the oldest of eleven children. He received his earliest musical instruction from his father, who was the town schoolmaster as well as a church organist. By age ten, Bruckner was filling in for his father as a substitute organist. When Bruckner was thirteen, his father passed away, and Bruckner entered the St. Florian monastery as a choir boy. At St.

Florian, he received further musical training on the magnificent pipe organ there, as well as a spiritual foundation that shaped his life in a profound way. At age sixteen, Bruckner concluded his studies at the monastery and moved to Linz to receive teacher training. He held teaching posts in Windhaag and Kronstorf before returning to St. Florian as an elementary teacher at age 21. Three years later, he became the principal organist at the monastery. At age 32, he left St. Florian to become the organist at a cathedral in Linz; during this time he also began a five-year correspondence with Professor Simon Sechter in Vienna, who provided guidance in harmony and counterpoint. Eventually, Bruckner took over Sechter's position at the Vienna Conservatory upon Sechter's retirement. Bruckner received further training in form and orchestration from Otto Kitzler, and in the process discovered the music of Liszt, Berlioz and Wagner, all of whom influenced his own compositional style. At age forty-two, Bruckner spent three months in a sanatorium after experiencing a nervous breakdown. Although he recovered sufficiently to resume his teaching and composing, he was plagued by depression throughout his life.

Bruckner composed eleven symphonies; the first one in 1863 at age 39, and the last, his "ninth", which was unfinished at the time of his death at age 72 (two of his symphonies are unnumbered). He began work on his Symphony No. 4 (which is actually his sixth symphony, due to the two that are unnumbered) on January 2, 1874, and completed it on November 22 of the same year. However, he continued to revise it until 1880, when it was finally performed. The premiere in Vienna was a huge success. A famous anecdote states that Bruckner was so pleased with Hans Richter's conducting during a rehearsal that he pressed a coin into the conductor's hand and told him to buy himself a beer. During the performance, Bruckner was called on stage to take a bow after every movement. It was the first of his symphonies to receive instant public acclaim. Further revisions followed in 1886 and 1888. Bruckner had private names for many of his symphonies, but the Fourth is the only one with an official descriptive title. However, Bruckner was evasive about why he called it "Romantic", saying only, "I have forgotten what image I had in mind." The French horn is prominently featured throughout this symphony, and Bruckner often utilizes the entire brass section to create blocks of sound, much as an organist (which Bruckner was) would use stops on an organ.

The symphony begins, seemingly from out of nowhere, with a hushed tremolo in the strings, followed by a horn call. The call is taken up by the woodwinds, soon building to a full fortissimo by the entire orchestra, and Bruckner's characteristic driving rhythm of 2 + 3 is heard. A contrasting idyllic section follows, with "familiar sounds of nature" such as birds and titmice. The development section concludes with a powerful brass chorale that leads into the recapitulation. The movement ends with the French horns emphatically repeating the opening motive, accompanied by forceful chords from the orchestra.

The melancholy second movement begins with a poignant and stirring cello theme that is actually a variation on the horn call from the first movement. As Bruckner scholar Robert Simpson states, this movement ". . .has something of the veiled funeral march about it, as if it were dreamt; sometimes we seem close to it, even involved, sometimes we seem to see it from so great a distance that it appears almost to stand still. It is hard to explain subjectively the uncannily poised nature of this movement."

A pastoral mood prevails in the Scherzo, which Bruckner called “Scene from the Hunt”. Bruckner’s signature 2 + 3 rhythm is heard throughout. The rustic Trio, titled “Dance tune played during the picnic”, is reminiscent of the ländler, an Austrian folk dance.

Like the first and third movements, the Finale begins with a horn solo over a hushed string accompaniment, followed by a hair-raising crescendo, with the brass section once again occupying center stage as the main theme from the first movement makes an exultant return. Unlike the unfolding of previous movements, the Finale is purposively fragmented, aptly described by Michael Steinberg as “a massive mosaic.” Steinberg goes on to praise the extensive coda that concludes this monumental symphony as “. . .one of his greatest codas, a journey in grandly confident strides across huge territories of the harmonic universe, surely paced, magnificently scored, and attaining a proud sense of arrival and affirmation that is altogether Bruckner’s own.”