

PROGRAM NOTES

Program Notes Written by Eric D. Fahn ©

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756 – 1791)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born on January 27, 1756 in Salzburg, Austria to Leopold and Anna Marie Mozart. At the time of Mozart's birth, Leopold was employed by the Archbishop of Salzburg as the vice-Kapellmeister of his orchestra. When Leopold realized that his son was a child prodigy, he decided to showcase Mozart's talents all over Europe. However, this did not help Mozart in securing a decent employment in the Viennese court later on in his life. In fact, at the time of his death, he was so deep in debt that he had to borrow money from his close friends to pay his bills. Mozart died on December 5, 1791; the cause of his death is unknown. During his lifetime, Mozart wrote over 600 compositions including 27 piano concerti, 5 violin concerti, numerous operas such as *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *The Magic Flute*, 41 symphonies, several sonatas for piano and violin, and his final work, *The Requiem*.

Symphony No. 36 (LINZ) in C Major, K. 425

Symphony No. 36 was written by Mozart during the couple's stopover at the city of Linz on their return trip to Salzburg from Vienna. He finished the work in four days and it was premiered at the Ballhaus Concert Hall on November 4, 1783. The music was scored for two oboes, two bassoons, two French horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings. Unfortunately, the original manuscript of this symphony has been lost.

The first movement begins with a slow introduction, similar to the symphonies of Joseph Haydn, follows by an energetic allegro section. The Adagio movement is in 6/8 meter and has the feeling of the old French dance *Siciliane*. However, the French horns and trumpets play an important role in this movement, a rather unusual orchestration practice in the classical period. The third movement *Menuetto* is a Baroque dance with a brief but interesting trio section. Here, the oboe and bassoon are engaged in a playful duet. The music of the final movement is full of energy and brings the music to a satisfying close. The presence of trumpets and French horns in all four movements suggests that it might have been written for a royal occasion.

Violin Concerto in G Major, K. 216

To many people, Mozart was mostly known as a child prodigy and a gifted composer. But in reality, he was also a very accomplished violinist. He began his violin lessons with his father, Leopold, at the age of six and his first official employment was to be the *konzertmeister* at the Archbishop's court in Salzburg. His first compositions for the violin were two sonatas for harpsichord with violin accompaniment (K. 6 & K. 7). Since Mozart always enjoyed playing the viola in a string quartet with fellow musicians such as Michael Haydn and J. B. Vanhal, it is no coincidence that his five beautiful violin concertos were so well written. *Violin Concerto in G Major* was composed in 1775 in Salzburg and it has three movements: *Allegro-Adagio-Rondeau*. The theme of the first movement was borrowed from an aria from his opera *Il Re Pastore* and the music is in sonata-form. The second movement is in ternary form (ABA) and the melody sounds very much like an opera aria. The somber tone colour throughout the music is created by the muted upper strings and the pizzicato lower strings accompaniment. The final movement is a *rondeau* in 6/8 meter. This concerto is the most performed of all Mozart's violin concertos.

CHARLES-CAMILLE SAINTS-SAËNS (1835 – 1935)

A child prodigy, Charles-Camille Saint-Saëns was born to a poor family. He was raised by his mother Clemence and his grandaunt Charlotte Masson after his father passed away while he was still an infant. He learned to play the piano at the age of two and began studying the piano with Camille-Marie Stamaty in 1842. Saint-Saëns made his concert debut at the tender age of ten by giving a recital at the Salle Pleyel with a performance of Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 15*, and a few other major works. In 1848, Saint-Saëns entered the *Conservatoire de Paris* where he studied composition

and organ performance with Fromental Halevy. He held various church organist positions during his lifetime and taught at the Ecole Niedermeyer (1861–1865). He also gained the admiration of noted composers such as Bizet, Gounod and Liszt; one of his prized students was Gabriel Faure.

Unfortunately, Saint-Saëns' personal life was not a happy one. He married 19 year-old Marie Laure Emille Truffot at the age of 40 but the two children whom they had together died within six months of each other. He was also close to his mother; her death brought him into a period of deep depression. Saint-Saëns died on December 16, 1921 at the Hotel de l'Oasis in Algiers. His body was returned to France and honoured by a state funeral at La Madeleine and interred at Cimetiere du Montparnasse in Paris.

Saint-Saëns' musical style is considered traditional and he followed conventions of the old masters very closely. He has written music for virtually every musical genre and gained the admiration of many notable composers such as Bizet, Gounod, Liszt and Wagner. His major works include *Piano Concerto in G Minor, Op. 22*, the *Carnival of the Animals*, *Danse Macabre, Op. 40*, *Samson and Delilah, Op. 47*, *Violin Concerto No. 3, Op. 64*, *Symphony No. 3 (Organ), Op. 78*, and *Havanaise for violin and orchestra, Op. 83*.

Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso in A Minor, Op. 28

Saint-Saëns' **Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso in A minor, Op. 28** was written in 1863 for the Spanish violin virtuoso Pablo de Sarasate and he gave its premiere in Paris on April 4, 1867. It has become a standard repertoire for the violin ever since. It is evident that only violinists with virtuosic skills will be able to perform this beautiful work by looking at the technical difficulty of the entire work. Saint-Saëns has written passages with double-stops, up-bow staccato, artificial harmonics, running scales/arpeggios, etc. The only technique that is not written into the music is pizzicato. The music is divided into two sections: The Introduction section has 36 bars with string accompaniment only; the second section, *Allegro ma non troppo*, is in Rondo form (ABACADA) and is accompanied by double woodwinds, two trumpets, two French horns, timpani and strings.