

Piano Concerto No. 25 in C Major, K. 503

W.A. Mozart (1756 – 1791)

".....posterity will not see such a talent again in 100 years." (Joseph Haydn)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born on January 27th., 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*.

Piano Concerto No. 25 was completed in Vienna on December 4, 1786 and was originally planned its premiere by Mozart himself in his Advent subscription concert series but was put off until Lent the following year. Even though this concerto is considered as one of Mozart's finest, it did not receive recognition until after his death. In fact, this particular concerto gained extensive exposure in the following films: *Barfly* (1987), *Boxing Helena* (1991) and *The Associate* (1996). The original manuscript minus the cadenza is now located in Jagiellońska Library in Kraków, Poland. The reason behind the missing cadenza is that Mozart was known to improvise at his concerts and therefore, performers of his concertos were expected to provide their own.

This concerto was originally written for the fortepiano, the predecessor of the modern piano but has a much lighter sound and touch. The music has three movements – Allegro Maestoso-Andante-Allegretto and is scored for flute, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, and orchestral strings. Due to the heavier than usual orchestration, the music sounds more symphonic than operatic, the musical form which Mozart always favoured for his other piano concertos.

The first movement is in sonata-form but with a twist. It is because Mozart did not diligently follow the theoretic structure of the musical form and kept listeners in suspense about what will happen next. The second movement is an Andante and the melody is simple but lyrical and romantic. The third movement is a rondo, which means that the main theme keeps returning between episodes throughout the entire movement. It has dance-like rhythms and very much resembles the gigue, a 17th century Baroque dance.

Le bourgeois gentilhomme, Op. 60

Richard Strauss (1864 – 1949)

Even if you have never heard of the composer Richard Strauss, you will probably recognize the music to the Stanley Kubrick's movie "**2001: A Space Odyssey**". It is because Kubrick had borrowed the music of Strauss' tone poem *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and used it in the opening scene of the movie. It has since become one of the most recognizable movie themes of all time.

Richard Georg Strauss was born into a wealthy and accomplished family in Munich, Bavaria on June 11th., 1864. His father, Franz Strauss, was an accomplished French horn player who played in the Munich Symphony Orchestra and his mother, Josephine, was an heiress of the famous German beer (Pshorr) dynasty. Strauss began taking piano lessons from

colleagues of his father's when he was four, wrote his first composition when he was six and gave piano recitals in his teenage years. He also attended the University of Munich for a brief period to study philosophy and aesthetics. Strauss married Pauline de Ahna (an opera singer) and they had a son named Franz. He passed away in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Bavaria, September 8, 1949.

As a composer, Strauss championed in two musical genres: Opera and the Tone Poem. His famous operas include *Salome* (1905) and *Electra* (1909); major tone poems include *Don Juan* (1889), *Till Eulenspiegel* (1895), *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1896), *Ein Heldenleben* (1898), *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911). He also wrote two French horn concertos, numerous chamber works for piano, string quartets and German lieder. His final work is the *Four Last Songs* written in 1948.

Richard Strauss' ***Le bourgeois gentilhomme*** is based on a 1670 political satire by Molière (pseudo-name of French playwright Jean-Baptiste Poquelin) and the basic plot is about how a middle class gentleman's attempt to climb the political and social ladder during the time of the Ottoman Empire. The music is written in the neo-classical style and makes reference to old baroque musical forms such as the Menuett and the Courante, but the harmony and orchestration clearly demonstrate Strauss' very distinctive compositional style. Unfortunately, the original opera adapted by Hugo von Hoffmannsthal was unsuccessful but with the assistance of Strauss, the new revised version gained more success. Later, Strauss selected some of the music from the opera and turned it into an orchestral suite. ***Le bourgeois gentilhomme*** was premiered in Vienna on 31 January 1920, under the baton of Strauss himself. There are a total of nine movements in the suite. The music is scored for 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 1 trumpet, 1 bass trombone, timpani and the following percussion (3 players): cymbals, tambourine, triangle, bass drum, snare drum, glockenspiel, piano, harp, strings.

Program Notes written by Eric D. Fahn ©