

PROGRAM NOTES

Symphony No. 5 in B-flat Major, D. 485

Franz Peter Schubert (1797 – 1828)

"He can do everything", Salieri exclaimed; "he is a genius.

He composes songs, masses, operas, quartets, — whatever you can think of."

Franz Peter Schubert was born on January 31, 1797 in Himmelpfortgrund, Austria; he was the son of Franz Theodor Schubert and Elisabeth Vietz. Schubert's first music teachers were his father (violin) and his older brother Ignaz (piano). He finally received formal lessons at the age of seven from Michael Holzer, an organist and choirmaster of a church in Lichtental. Schubert's vocal talent also caught the eyes of Antonio Salieri around the same time and he began taking composition lessons with him. In October of 1808, Schubert entered the Stadtkonvikt (Imperial Seminary) through a vocal scholarship. And in 1814, Schubert entered teachers' college at Normalhauptschule and taught at his father's school in Lichtental for two years after graduation; a job that he hated with a passion.

From a very young age, Schubert was constantly exposed to chamber music at home. His family would get together to play string quartets. His brothers Ferdinand and Ignaz played the violin, his father on the violoncello and Franz Peter on the viola. Therefore, it was no coincidence that Schubert wrote many of his early string quartets for this ensemble. Even though he has written many works in his relative short life, his music was not very well known in his homeland. It was because they were often performed in small venues for his close circle of friends and most of his compositions were not published in his life time. It was not until after his death that people took notice of his talents. It was composers such as Johannes Brahms, Franz Liszt, Felix Mendelssohn and Robert Schuman who later discovered his works and decided to reintroduce Schubert's music to the audience.

Schubert was never married but had had a few romantic encounters. His first love was a soprano named Therese Grob, whom he met in 1814, and wrote many liturgical works for her. Schubert wanted to marry her but the union did not take place because of a harsh marriage-consent law in 1815. This particular law required the groom to demonstrate his ability to support the family, and poor Franz Peter was never in that position. His next encounter was his failed relationship with his student, the Countess Karoline Eszterhazy. But all he did to gain her love was dedicated a piano duet, *Fantasy in F Minor*, to her and that's just not good enough for her. Schubert died at the age 31 of syphilis infection. It was believed that he contracted it through his frequent visits with prostitutes. He left us with over 600 lieder, 9 symphonies, numerous song cycles (*Winterreise* and *Die schöne Müllerin*), piano works, chamber music (string quintet "*Trout*" and string quartet "*Death and the Maiden*") and many operas.

Schubert completed his Symphony No. 5 in B-flat major on October 3, 1816. Unfortunately, it did not receive its premiere until 1841, long after Schubert's death. It is scored for one flute, two oboes, two bassoons, two French horns and strings; this instrumentation is the smallest of all Schubert's symphonies. There are many arguments about why Schubert only used so few instruments. One being that the symphony was designed to perform in a small room not a concert hall; another being that Otto Hatwig, a local violinist in Vienna, only had a handful of musicians available for Schubert to use and therefore, it was impossible to write a larger work. The symphony has four movements and is written in the classical style; Mozart's influence is evident throughout the piece. In fact, he once wrote this in his own diary about Mozart, "*O Mozart! Immortal Mozart! What countless impressions of a brighter, better life hast thou stamped upon our souls!*" The first and last movements are relatively short but the music is extremely lively. The melodies in the second movement, Andante, are lyrical follows by a robust third movement, Menuetto. However, the music sounds more like a scherzo than a minuet.

Piano Concerto No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 11

Frederic Chopin (1810 – 1849)

‘There is spirit in these melodies, there is fantasy in these passages, and everywhere there is originality’.

(François-Joseph Fétis, editor of the *Revue musicale*)

Frederic Chopin was born in the Duchy of Warsaw on March 1, 1810, a Polish state established by Napoleon. His father, Nicholas Chopin, taught him how to play the violin and his mother, Justyna Krzyżanowska taught him the piano. He gave his first public concert at the age of seven and began taking formal music lessons from Czech pianist Wojciech Zywny in 1817. Between 1823 and 1826, Chopin took organ lessons at the Warsaw Lyceum with Wilhelm Würfelduring and then he spent three years (1826 – 1829) studying with composer Józef Elsner at the Warsaw Conservatory. Chopin left Poland for Paris in 1831. While Chopin was in Paris, he met his greatest supporter George Sand, a French female author who supported him both financially and emotionally for many years. But they did not get married after all because her children strongly opposed their union.

Chopin wrote primarily for the piano and they included *etudes, impromptus, mazurkas, nocturnes, preludes, polonaises, scherzo and waltzes*. His B minor piano sonata is a considered a monumental work among all his compositions. Chopin passed away in Paris in 1849, possibly from tuberculosis. Although his body was buried at Père Lachaise cemetery, his heart was interred at Holy Cross Church in Warsaw. Chopin completed his piano concerto No. 1 in 1830 and had its premiere on October 11, 1830 with himself as the soloist. It was dedicated to Friedrich Kalkbrenner.

Chronologically, it was his second piano concerto but it was published first. Russian composer Mily Balakirev re-orchestrated the concerto, replacing the second oboe with the English horn, and also arranged it for violin and orchestra as well as for piano solo of the second movement. The concerto has three

movements and is scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, and 2 bassoons, 2 trumpets, 4 French horns, tenor trombone, timpani and strings.

The first movement is in sonata-form and it opens with a long exposition before the first theme of three themes enters. Chopin's love of interplay of themes is evident here. In a letter to his friend Tytus Woyciechowski, Chopin described the second movement, Romanze – Larghetto, as follows: *"The Adagio for the new concerto is in E major. It is not intended to be powerful, it is more romance-like, calm, melancholic, it should give the impression of a pleasant glance at a place where a thousand fond memories come to mind..... by the playing of strings, the sound of which is muffled by sordini", and so, as the composer rather humorously enlightens his friend, 'a sort of comb, which spans the strings and imparts to them a new, silvery tone.'* The final movement is a rondo and the music somewhat resembles the popular Polish dance *krakowiak*.

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