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MAXIM'S MOZART

24 - 26 Mar 2022

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Season 2021/22

MAXIM'S MOZART

Kindly supported by Donald and Louise MacDonald

Thursday 24 March, 7.30pm The Queen's Hall, Edinburgh **Friday 25 March, 7.30pm** City Halls, Glasgow **Saturday 26 March, 7.30pm** Aberdeen Music Hall

Mozart Serenade No 6, K.239, 'Serenata notturna' **Mozart** Piano Concerto No 20 in D minor, K.466

Interval of 20 minutes

Mozart Symphony No 39 in E-flat Major, K.543

Maxim Emelyanychev Conductor / Piano





4 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5AB +44 (0)131 557 6800 | info@sco.org.uk | sco.org.uk

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Second Violin

Gordon Bragg Kana Kawashima* Sarah Bevan Baker Rachel Smith Niamh Lyons George Smith Kristin Deeken

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Clarinet

Maximiliano Martín William Stafford

Bassoon

Cerys Ambrose-Evans Alison Green

Horn

Nick Mooney Jamie Shield

Trumpet

Peter Franks Shaun Harrold

Timpani

Louise Goodwin

*Concertante players for Serenata Notturna



WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO HEAR

MOZART (1756-1791)

Serenade No 6, K.239, 'Serenata notturna' (1776)

Marcia Menuetto Rondo

MOZART (1756-1791)

Piano Concerto No 20 in D minor, K.466 (1785)

Allegro Romanza Rondo: Allegro assai

MOZART (1756-1791)

Symphony No 39 in E-flat Major, K.543 (1788)

Adagio - Allegro Andante con moto Menuetto: Allegretto Finale: Allegro Just 12 years separate the three pieces of music in tonight's concert, but they nonetheless show us three entirely different Mozarts, at three contrasting moments in his brief life.

It was a 19-year-old Mozart who completed his Serenata notturna in January 1776 in his birth city of Salzburg. His original manuscript bears that date, but we don't know much more about the piece's background – why it was written, for example, or for whom. That's somewhat frustrating, because the Serenata notturna clearly served a function. It was almost certainly written to a commission from a wealthy Salzburg patron, probably for a particular occasion, and Mozart even embedded clues within the music itself that may have raised a laugh from Salzburg locals.

Its title alone (bestowed by Mozart's father Leopold) indicates that the Serenata notturna was written to entertain quests at an evening event, rather than that its music is meant to be especially evocative of night-time. It's a surprisingly brief work, too: a conventional serenade would have typically included several more movements than the Serenata notturna's three. And it's written – very unusually – for two separate orchestras, almost as though Mozart was consciously emulating a Baroque concerto grosso. His first orchestra comprises four soloists on violins, viola and double bass, while his second contains violins, cellos and timpani.

Whatever its particular origins and purpose, however, the *Serenata notturna* looks back to an earlier, younger Mozart. Though he would continue producing



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Its title alone (bestowed by Mozart's father Leopold) indicates that the Serenata notturna was written to entertain guests at an evening event, rather than that its music is meant to be especially evocative of night-time.

these lighter, more overtly entertaining serenades until almost the end of his short life – indeed, his famous *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* (officially his Serenade No 13, K525) comes from 1787, just four years before his death – he found a lucrative source of income supplying them to wealthy patrons as a young musician in Salzburg.

That was, however, until the appointment of the reformist Hieronymus Colloredo as Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg in 1772, and the restrictions he placed on musical performance across the city. Mozart found a job at Colloredo's court in 1773, but felt increasingly frustrated by the restrictions placed on him to channel his creativity away from light-hearted serenades and divertimentos for secular occasions around the city, and instead into seriousminded works for the church. The closure

of Salzburg's court theatre – and thereby the removal of a crucial local outlet for Mozart's burgeoning passion for opera – may have been the final straw that led to the composer resigning from his post in 1777, and heading for the bright lights of Vienna four years later, where he would try his luck as a freelance composer and performer.

But back to 1776, and the joyful exuberance of the Serenata notturna. Its first movement seems to pull in two separate directions, with delicate, lyrical material for its smaller orchestra that the larger orchestra constantly drags back into its stirring, striding march rhythms. The second movement is quite a heavy-footed, strongly accented Minuet that puts the smaller orchestra firmly in the spotlight in its delicate, contrasting trio section. A mischievous little tune from the first

violin kicks off the dashing Rondo finale. The music swerves sideways into two unexpected sections – first a sentimental slow passage, then a rustic peasant dance – that seem so specific and so surprising that they must surely have been allusions designed to entertain Mozart's Salzburg listeners. After some pizzicato playfulness, however, the music dashes to a goodnatured conclusion.

We jump forward nine years – to 1785 – for the concert's next piece, to discover the 29-year-old Mozart at the height of his powers and his popularity in Vienna. The capital's public seemed to adore anything he placed before them – especially if it showcased the great pianist/composer's prodigious keyboard prowess, as is undeniably the case here. Mozart himself premiered his Piano Concerto No 20 on 11 February 1785, at Vienna's Mehlgrube Casino, and it was an immediate success.

Mozart wrote no fewer than 12 piano concertos in Vienna between 1784 and 1786 (Nos 14 to 25), but No 20 stands out from the others. It wouldn't be unfair to say that – despite their immaculate craftsmanship, their unbridled joy, their thoughtfulness and vigour – in those other concertos Mozart was essentially out to give the Viennese what they wanted. With its sombre mood and its unusual minor key (the same key as Don Giovanni, the Requiem and the Queen of the Night's famous aria - D minor was clearly a portentous tonality for Mozart), the Piano Concerto No 20 sets out to break new ground, to challenge and provoke. Indeed, No 20 is famously one of Mozart's most powerful and personal keyboard concertos, and one whose turbulence and



overt emotion seem to look directly ahead towards Beethoven. Mozart's younger German colleague was particularly fond of the Concerto, performing it on several occasions and writing his own cadenzas for it. You could be forgiven for arguing he doffed his cap directly to it in his own Third Piano Concerto.



Neuer Markt in Vienna with Capuchin Church and Haus zur Mehlgrube on the right, painting by Bernardo Bellotto, 1760

The Piano Concerto No 20's sense of tension is there right from the hushed opening of its first movement, with syncopated upper strings and ominous growls from cellos and basses, before the music bursts explosively into life. Surprising, sudden changes in dynamics are a feature of the whole

movement, in fact, as are subtle thematic transformations, so that the reappearances of significant melodies, while always recognisible, are often not precisely the same as previously.

Mozart's second movement opens with the piano soloist alone, and its elegant, song-

like theme more than earns the movement its 'Romance' title. More surprising, though, is the movement's sudden excursion into a minor key for fiery, virtuosic keyboard writing and stabbing interjections from the strings: it's as if the first movement's tensions have briefly resurfaced.

The fraught drama continues in the closing movement, though it sweeps into a brilliant D major straight after the soloist's cadenza, an ending that scholar Alfred Einstein memorably described as 'a coda of enchanting sweetness, which represents at the same time an affecting ray of light, a return to the social atmosphere of earlier works, the courtly gesture of a grand seigneur who wishes to leave his guests with a friendly impression'.

By 1788 – three years after composing and premiering his Piano Concerto No 20, and the year he wrote his Symphony No 39 – the 32-year-old Mozart had discovered how fickle Viennese audiences could be. While they'd once lapped up anything he produced, their tastes had moved on. And after the Habsburg Monarchy declared war on the Ottoman Empire in February 1788, wealthy Viennese patrons found they had far less disposable income to fritter on such luxuries as concerts and commissions. Once the darling of Viennese society, Mozart was now reduced to begging friends for loans.

That said, the popular perception of a penniless Mozart struggling to make ends meet during the final years of his life isn't quite right either. He was still receiving a relatively comfortable income. It's just that he also managed to spend substantially more than he earnt – and, of course, he was supporting his sickly wife Constanze and their two young children. The family moved

from central Vienna to the then suburb of Alsergrund in the summer of 1788, ostensibly to save money, though Mozart later admitted that he was paying the same rent away from the city centre, just for a larger property.

The apparently precarious circumstances of Mozart's last years form the background to his final trilogy of symphonies – Nos 39, 40 and 41 ('the Jupiter'). In certain sections of the popular imagination, not to mention musical scholarship, these are visionary works written simply for posterity, against a backdrop of poverty, without any specific prospect of performance, but instead representing the tormented composer summing up his compositional powers for the benefit of future generations.

That's not entirely false – after all, surely any composer wants to demonstrate their creative prowess in any new piece, certainly one as large-scale and lavish as a symphony. But the reality is probably slightly more mundane. For a start, when he was composing the three symphonies during the summer of 1788, Mozart had no spooky premonition that he would die three years later. Why, then, would he perceive these works as his 'final' symphonies? In fact, he'd planned a concert series for 1788 (which he later had to cancel), and almost certainly intended the three symphonies to be premiered as part of it. He even had their orchestral parts copied – a costly process that the impecunious composer surely wouldn't have bothered with unless the parts were needed for performances.

Nonetheless, Mozart did write the three symphonies together, a fact that has led some commentators to imagine them as a single, grand mega-piece, Today, we might consider a symphony to be a glimpse into a composer's innermost, profoundest thoughts, a deeply personal drama melding together abstract logic, confrontation and resolution. That, however, is essentially a model laid down by Beethoven. For Mozart's audiences, a symphony was something relatively light, entertaining, easy to play and straightforward to understand. You can see why they might have considered No 39 – and its siblings Nos 40 and 41 – to be too clever for its own good, too demanding for listeners and players alike.

with No 39 forming a kind of expansive overture to the drama of No 40 and the lavish celebration of No 41. And they're undeniably a leap forward from Mozart's earlier symphonies – something we can only really appreciate by imagining ourselves as listeners at the end of the 18th century, rather than the start of the 21st. Today, we might consider a symphony to be a glimpse into a composer's innermost, profoundest thoughts, a deeply personal drama melding together abstract logic, confrontation and resolution. That, however, is essentially a model laid down by Beethoven. For Mozart's audiences, a symphony was something relatively light, entertaining, easy to play and straightforward to understand. You can see why they might have considered No 39 – and its siblings Nos 40 and 41 – to be too clever for its own good, too demanding for listeners and players alike.

Mozart builds up a sense of expectation in the slow introduction to his first movement, complete with majestic fanfares and drum strokes, though the grand opening melts seamlessly into the movement's faster main section, in a lilting three time.

An elegant violin melody kicks off the delicate second movement, though Mozart holds his woodwind back until the stormier central episode. His bumptious third movement sounds more like an Austrian Ländler dance than an elegant court minuet, and his finale plays endless witty games with its mischievous, dashing opening melody, which he puts through all manner of transformations before it even makes one last, cheeky appearance amid the movement's otherwise assertive conclusion.

© David Kettle

Conductor / Piano

MAXIM EMELYANYCHEV



At the Scottish Chamber Orchestra Maxim Emelyanychev follows in the footsteps of just five previous Principal Conductors in the Orchestra's 48-year history; Roderick Brydon (1974-1983), Jukka-Pekka Saraste (1987-1991), Ivor Bolton (1994-1996), Joseph Swensen (1996-2005) and Robin Ticciati (2009-2018).

2020/21 Season engagements included conducting the opera of the Geneva Grand Theatre in Mozart's *Clemenza di Tito* and the Toulouse Théâtre du Capitole in Mozart's *Nozze di Figaro*. Debuts with the Orchestre de Paris, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the Münchner Philharmoniker, the London Philharmonic, the Luxembourg Philharmonic, the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Accademia Nazionale of Santa Cecilia Orchestra, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Hessischer Rundfunk Frankfurt Orchestra, the Deutsche Symphony Orchestra, and returning to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

He regularly collaborates with renowned artists such as Max Emanuel Cencic, Patrizia Ciofi, Joyce DiDonato, Franco Fagioli, Richard Goode, Sophie Karthäuser, Stephen Hough, Katia et Marielle Labèque, Marie-Nicole Lemieux, Julia Lezhneva, Alexei Lubimov, Riccardo Minasi, Xavier Sabata and Dmitry Sinkovsky.

Maxim is also a highly respected chamber musician. His most recent recording, of Brahms Violin Sonatas with long-time collaborator and friend Aylen Pritchin, was released on Aparté in December 2021 and has attracted outstanding reviews internationally.

With the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Maxim has recorded the Schubert Symphony No 9 – the symphony with which he made his debut with the orchestra – which was released on Linn Records in November 2019.

For full biography please visit sco.org.uk



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