

Colorado Symphony Orchestra
2011-2012 Masterworks Series

November 18, 19 and 20, 2011

ANDREW LITTON, conductor
CLEO PARKER ROBINSON DANCE

MOZART Ballet Music from *Idomeneo, King of Crete*, K. 367
 Chaconne — Larghetto — Chaconne
 Largo — Allegretto — Più Allegro
 Passepied
 Gavotte
 Passacaille

SCHUBERT Symphony No. 5 in B-flat major, D. 485
 Allegro
 Andante con moto
 Menuetto: Allegro molto
 Allegro vivace

— *Intermission* —

PROKOFIEV Selections from *Romeo and Juliet*, Op. 64
 Morning Dance
 Montagues and Capulets
 Juliet as a Young Girl
 The Street Awakens
 Dance
 Romeo and Juliet
 Masks
 Minuet
 Romeo at Juliet's Before Parting
 Death of Tybalt

Notes on the Program by Dr. Richard E. Rodda

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)

Ballet Music from *Idomeneo, King of Crete*, K. 367

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born on January 27, 1756 in Salzburg, and died December 5, 1791 in Vienna. Idomeneo was composed in 1781 and premiered on January 29, 1781 at the court opera in Munich. The score calls for pairs of woodwinds, horns and trumpets, timpani and strings. Duration is about 15 minutes.

By 1780, Mozart's duties in the musical establishment of the Salzburg Archbishop had become almost unbearably irksome to him. Among his greatest frustrations was that the small provincial city allowed him no opportunity to indulge his greatest creative desire — to write operas. Much of the fame he gained as a teenager had come from the successes his stage works enjoyed in Milan and Vienna, but he had not composed an opera since *Il ré pastore* in 1775, and he was painfully eager to prove his growing artistic mastery to the world. It was therefore with great excitement that he received a commission in the summer of 1780 for a grand *opera seria* from the Elector Carl Theodor to be performed during the Munich carnival season early the next year. Mozart saw the commission as a chance to establish his fame and international standing, and perhaps gain a much-desired position at the Bavarian court or some other musical capital of Europe.

For his subject, Mozart chose the old French libretto *Idomeneo* by Danchet that André Campra had set in 1712, and he enlisted the Salzburg Court Chaplain, Giambattista Varesco, to adapt the story into Italian. In the plot, the fleet of King Idomeneo of Crete is ravaged by a storm, and he vows to sacrifice the first person he meets on shore if the gods allow him to reach safety. That person turns out to be his son, Idamante. Idomeneo tries to send Idamante away in an attempt to save him, but a fearsome tempest erupts and a terrible sea monster rises from the depths as the ship is about to embark. Idomeneo recognizes these signs as punishment by the gods, and he confides everything to the High Priest. Idamante declares himself ready to be sacrificed, but his beloved, Ilia, offers herself in his place. The High Priest announces that Idomeneo will be forgiven everything if he abdicates in favor of Idamante, and if Ilia marries the new king. This being done, the opera comes to a happy conclusion.

It is unknown where or how Mozart inserted his ballet music into *Idomeneo*, though the score indicates the name of the choreographer (Le Grand, the dance master at the Munich court) and clearly differentiates between the solo dances (even noting the performers' names) and the sections for the *corps de ballet*. The five movements comprise a *Chaconne*, *Pas seul [Solo Dance] de Mr. Le Grand*, *Passepied*, *Gavotte* (whose theme Mozart reworked for the finale of his Piano Concerto No 25, K. 503 of 1786) and *Passacaille*.

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

Franz Schubert was born on January 31, 1797 in Vienna, and died there on November 19, 1828. He composed the Symphony No. 5 in Vienna during September and October 1816. It was premiered on October 17, 1841 at Vienna's Josefstädter Theater, conducted by Michael Leiternmayer. The score calls for flute, pairs of oboes, bassoons and horns and strings. Duration is about 30 minutes.

Schubert kept a perfunctory diary for a few months during 1816. Among the scraps of home-spun philosophy ("Man resembles a ball, to be played with by chance and passion." "Happier he who finds a true man-friend. Happier still he who finds a true friend in his wife.") is an entry for June 17th: "Today I composed for money for the first time. Namely, a cantata for the name-day of Professor Watteroth. The fee is 100 florins." Schubert, age nineteen, had metamorphosed into a professional composer. At least he thought that there was sufficient reason at the time to leave his irksome teaching post at his father's school in order to live the life of an artist. Thus began the bohemian existence of his last dozen years — living by the gladly proffered aid of friends, daily climbing up to Grinzing to haunt the cafés, avoiding society for dislike of buying and wearing good clothes. And music, always music. He composed

incessantly and spent evenings performing it. His devoted band of friends were delighted to sing and play what he wrote. Franz von Hartmann recorded of one of these *Schubertiads*, "There was a huge gathering [including] Gahy, who played four-hand piano music gloriously with Schubert, and Vogl, who sang almost thirty splendid songs.... When the music was over there was grand feeding and dancing. At 12:30 [we went] home. To bed at 1 o'clock."

Supplementing the songs and piano works for these Schubertiads was a growing collection of orchestral pieces composed for other amateur musical soirées. A family string quartet, comprising his brothers Ferdinand and Ignaz on violins, his father on cello and Franz on viola, attracted other players and soon evolved into a small orchestra. They rehearsed at first in the Schubert household, but as the membership grew new quarters had to be found for their activities, and they moved in 1816 to the apartments of Leopold von Sonnleithner. It was for one of those informal evenings that Schubert composed the sparkling B-flat Symphony.

The Symphony opens with a delicate curtain of woodwind harmonies. The violins present the main theme, a gracious melody built on the notes of the common chords. A shadow passes quickly over the music (technically, a brief excursion into the minor key — an expressive device Schubert learned from Mozart) before the main theme is repeated and extended (more shadows) as transition to the second theme. The compact development begins with a decorated version of the opening woodwind harmonies. A discussion of the decorating figure ensues as does a full recapitulation of the exposition's materials. The lovely *Andante* is built on two extended themes: the first is given immediately by the strings; the second is also played by the strings, with obbligato phrases from the oboe and bassoon. Eschewing a development, the second half of the movement is simply a restatement of the two themes. Though the third movement is marked "Menuetto," in tempo and temperament it is truly a scherzo; the bucolic central trio features the bassoon. The closing movement recalls the vibrant finales of Haydn in its clear melodic structure, rhythmic vivacity and witty use of dynamics.

SERGEI PROKOFIEV (1891-1953)

Selections from *Romeo and Juliet*

Sergei Prokofiev was born on April 23, 1891 in Sontzovka, Russia, and died on March 5, 1953 in Moscow. His ballet Romeo and Juliet dates from 1935. It was premiered in Brno, Czechoslovakia in December 1938. The score calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, tenor saxophone, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, cornet, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, piano and strings. Duration is about 40 minutes.

When Prokofiev returned to Russia in 1933 after his long sojourn in the West, he had already acquired a reputation as a composer of ballet. His first balletic effort had been the volcanic *Ala and Lolly* written for Diaghilev in Paris in 1914, whose music is better known in its concert form as the *Scythian Suite*. Though Diaghilev did not like the piece and refused to stage it, he remained convinced of Prokofiev's talent and commissioned *Chout* ("The Buffoon") from him in 1921 and produced it with his Ballet Russe. *Le Pas d'acier* ("The Steel Step") followed in 1927, and *The Prodigal Son* in 1928, the last new ballet Diaghilev produced before his death the following year. *Sur le Borysthène* ("On the Dnieper") was staged, unsuccessfully, by the Paris Opéra in 1932. The last two of these works showed a move away from the spiky musical language of Prokofiev's earlier years toward a simpler, more lyrical style, and the Kirov Theater in Leningrad took them as evidence in 1934 that he should be commissioned to compose a full-length, three-act ballet on one of the theater's classic stories of romance — Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Prokofiev was immediately taken with the Leningrad Kirov's proposal for a *Romeo and Juliet* ballet, and spent much time during the spring of 1935 with the company's stage director, Sergei Radlov, working out a detailed scenario. Enough of the music was composed during the summer at Prokofiev's secluded house in Polenovo, near Tarusa, that he could write to a friend in late July, "Juliet is already tripping through the third act." For reasons never made clear (had the outspoken Prokofiev tread on some sensitive political toe?), the Kirov withdrew its offer to produce the ballet, and a contract with the Moscow Bolshoi was arranged instead. A tryout of the music was given in the Beethoven Hall of the Bolshoi Theater in October, but failed to ignite enthusiasm for its balletic potential. "Undanceable," declared some. V.V. Konin, in a dispatch to the *Musical Courier*, criticized "the awkward incongruity between the realistic idiom of the musical language, which successfully characterizes the individualism of the Shakespearean images, and the blind submission to the worst traditions of the old form." This last

comment referred to the “happy ending” of the original scenario, in which Romeo and Juliet survive to join in the finale. (“Dead people don’t dance,” reasoned Prokofiev.) Whatever its motive, the Bolshoi broke its contract to stage the ballet, so Prokofiev turned to the expedient of extracting music from the complete score for concert performance. Two orchestral suites were assembled and heard in Russia and the United States before the complete ballet was premiered, in Brno, Czechoslovakia in December 1938, a production in which the composer took no part. A third orchestral suite dates from 1944.

At about the time of the Brno performance, Prokofiev met the choreographer Leonid Lavrovsky. Lavrovsky, building on the reputation the *Romeo and Juliet* music had acquired in its concert performances, finally convinced the Leningrad Kirov to stage the work. A satisfactory way was found to restore the tragic close of the original play. At a celebratory supper party following the successful opening of *Romeo and Juliet*, delayed for a half-decade in its Russian premiere, Galina Ulanova, the production’s prima ballerina, ended her toast with a bit of fractured Shakespeare: “Never was a story of more woe/Than this of Prokofiev’s music for *Romeo.*” *Romeo and Juliet* has since become one of the most popular of all full-length ballets.

The bright *Morning Dance* helps to establish the mood of the ballet’s opening scene. *The Montagues and Capulets* incorporates the music accompanying the Duke as he forbids further fights between the families on pain of death, the heavy-footed *Dance of the Capulet Knights* from the Act I ballroom scene, and a graceful transformation of the Knights’ theme to portray Juliet. *Juliet as a Young Girl* characterizes the several moods of the heroine, not yet fourteen years old. *The Street Awakens* depicts the morning activities of the city. *Dance* is an episode from the Act II folk festival. The rapturous balcony scene is titled simply *Romeo and Juliet*. The swaggering/cautious *Masks* depicts the arrival in masks and costumes of Romeo, Mercutio and Benvolio at the ball in the house of their enemy. The *Minuet* describes the arrival of the guests at the Capulet mansion in the Act I ball scene. *The Death of Tybalt* is based on the music accompanying the duel of Tybalt and Mercutio, Tybalt’s death and his funeral procession.

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