

Program Notes for Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 5

Apr. 17 & 18

***Fratres* for Strings and Percussion** **ARVO PÄRT (B. 1935)**

Composed in 1977.

Arvo Pärt, born on September 11, 1935 in Paide, Estonia, fifty miles southeast of Tallinn, graduated from the Tallinn Conservatory in 1963 while working as a recording director in the music division of the Estonian Radio. A year before leaving the Conservatory, he won first prize in the All-Union Young Composers' Competition for a children's cantata and an oratorio. In 1980, he immigrated to Vienna, where he took Austrian citizenship; since 1982, he has made his home in West Berlin. Pärt's many distinctions include the Artistic Award of the Estonian Society in Stockholm, Scholarship Award of the Musagetis Society in Zurich, honorary memberships in the Royal Swedish Academy of Music, American Academy of Arts and Letters, and Belgium's Royal Academy of Arts, five Grammy nominations, honorary doctorates from the universities of Sydney, Tartu, Durham and the Music Academy of Tallinn, Order of the Estonian State Second Class, Herder Award conferred by the University of Vienna, and recognition as a *Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres de la République Française*.

Pärt's earliest works show the influence of the Soviet music of Prokofiev and Shostakovich, but beginning in 1960 with *Necrology* for Orchestra, he adopted the serial principles of Schoenberg. This procedure quickly exhausted its interest for him, however, and, for a fruitful period in the mid-1960s during which he produced a cello concerto, the Second Symphony and the *Collage on BACH* for Orchestra, he explored the techniques of collage and quotation. Criticized by government authorities for the religious content of several of his works and still dissatisfied with the stylistic basis of his music, he abandoned creative work for several years, during which time he devoted himself to the study of the music of such Medieval and Renaissance composers as Machaut, Ockeghem, Obrecht and Josquin. Guided by the spirit and method of those ancient masters, Pärt broke his compositional silence in 1976 with the small piano piece *Für Alina*, which utilizes quiet dynamics, rhythmic stasis and open-interval and triadic harmonies to create a thoughtful mood of mystical introspection reflecting the composer's personal piety. His subsequent works, all of which eschew electronic tone production in favor of traditional instruments and voices, have been written in this pristine, otherworldly style inspired by Gregorian chant and Renaissance polyphony, and seek to unite ancient and modern ages in music that seems rapt out of time.

Pärt calls his manner of composition "tintinnabulation," from the Latin word for bells. "Tintinnabulation," the composer explains, "is an area I sometimes wander into when I am searching for answers — in my life, my music, my work. In my dark hours, I have the certain feeling that everything outside this one thing has no meaning. The complex and many-faceted only confuses me, and I must search for unity. What is it, this one thing, and how do I find my way to it? Traces of this perfect thing appear in many guises — and everything that is unimportant falls away. Tintinnabulation is like this. Here, I am alone with silence. I have discovered that it is enough when a single note is beautifully played. This one note, or a silent beat, or a moment of silence, comfort me. I work with very few elements — with one voice, with two voices. I build with the most primitive materials — with the triad, with one specific tonality. The three notes of a triad are like bells. And that is why I call it tintinnabulation."

Fratres was composed in 1977 for string quintet and wind quintet, and first performed by the Estonian early music ensemble "Hortus musicus." Pärt has subsequently adapted the work for many other solo and ensemble combinations of strings, winds and percussion. *Fratres* is based on the repetitions of an austere, hymnal theme played above a continuous drone on the interval of an open fifth. The repetitions (eight in the original version), separated by notes played as or simulating drum taps, are transposed downward a minor or major third on each appearance, so that the sonority grows lower and richer as *Fratres* unfolds. The

dynamic peak is reached in the middle of the work, after which the music is gradually overtaken by silence to end in a state of hushed spirituality. The work's title — "*Brothers*" — seems to indicate that this music was inspired by the vision of a solemn procession of Medieval monks, wending their way by flickering candlelight along the ambulatory to the abbey's chapels for another of the endless succession of services that regulated their monastic lives.

Concerto No. 5 for Violin and Orchestra in A major, K. 219, "Turkish" **WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)**

Composed in December 1775.

The name of Mozart first calls to mind the breathtaking array of compositions he left to posterity. To his contemporaries, however, he was almost equally well known as one of the foremost performers of his day. His masterful piano playing was lauded in Vienna and elsewhere, and his reputation for excellent musicianship was common knowledge for several decades after his death. Less known than Mozart's keyboard ability was his extraordinary talent on the violin. His father, Leopold, was a renowned teacher of the instrument who issued a popular tutor for violin instruction in 1756, the year of Wolfgang's birth. Young Mozart learned to play the violin early and well, and it was one of the chief accomplishments with which he dazzled his listeners on his first tour, in 1763. He was seven. On his initial trip to Italy seven years later, two of the greatest violinist-composers — Giovanni Sammartini and Pietro Nardini — were so impressed with the boy's playing that they each wrote special sets of exercises for him.

Back in Salzburg after his southern travels, Mozart was appointed concertmaster of the Court Orchestra on November 27, 1770, a position he held until he moved to Vienna in 1781. Leopold had a justifiably high opinion of his son's ability, and told him, "You have no idea how well you play the violin. If you would only do yourself justice, and play with boldness, spirit and fire, you would be the first violinist in Europe." Wolfgang was, however, more interested in the keyboard than in the violin, and replied tartly, "When performing is necessary, I decidedly prefer the piano and I probably always shall." Even Leopold's argument that, since the violin was the most popular instrument of the time, he could gain greater financial success as a violinist-composer than as a pianist-composer, did not sway Wolfgang. After Wolfgang left Salzburg in 1781, he refused to touch the violin again, even preferring to play the viola in his informal string quartet sessions in Vienna.

Mozart's five authentic Violin Concertos were all products of a single year — 1775. At nineteen he was already a veteran of five years experience as concertmaster, for which his duties included not only playing, but also composing, acting as co-conductor with the keyboard player (modern orchestral conducting was not to originate for at least two more decades) and soloing in concertos. It was for this last function that Mozart wrote these concertos. He was, of course, a quick study at everything that he did, and each of these works builds on the knowledge gained from its predecessors. It was with the last three (K. 216, 218, 219) that something more than simple experience emerged, however, because it was with these compositions that Mozart indisputably entered the era of his musical maturity. These are his earliest pieces now regularly heard in the concert hall, and the last one, No. 5 in A major, is the greatest of the set. A. Hyatt King wrote that this is not only the best of Mozart's concertos for violin, "but has no rival throughout the second half of the 18th century."

The opening movement is in sonata-concerto form, but has some curious structural experiments more usually associated with the music of Haydn than with that of Mozart. After the initial presentation of the thematic material by the orchestra, the soloist is introduced with the surprising device of a brief, stately *Adagio*, a technique perhaps derived from the D major Clavier Concerto of C.P.E. Bach, Johann Sebastian's musically adventurous Son No. 2. When the *Allegro* tempo resumes, the soloist plays not the main theme already announced by the ensemble, but a new lyrical melody for which the original main theme becomes the accompaniment. More new material fills the remainder of the exposition. The development section is invested with passages of dark harmonic color which cast expressive shadows across the generally sunny

landscape of the movement, and lend it emotional weight. The recapitulation calls for restrained, elegant virtuosity from the soloist.

The second movement is a graceful song in sonatina form (sonata-allegro without development). The final movement is an extended rondo in the style and rhythm of a minuet. It is from one of the episodes separating the returns of the theme that the work acquired its sobriquet, "Turkish." This passage occurs before the theme is heard for the last time, and stands in surprising contrast to its elegant surroundings by changing its tempo, meter and mood to recreate a vivacious contradance in the style popular at the time in the dance halls of Vienna. A number of short tunes comprise this section. Most are, according to A. Hyatt King, derived from Hungarian folk music (known, vaguely, as "Turkish" in the 18th century), though one was part of a ballet titled "Harem Jealousies" that Mozart borrowed from his own 1773 opera, *Lucio Silla*. After the wonderful clangor of this episode, which even calls for the basses to strike their strings with the wood of the bow, the return of the minuet theme is guaranteed to bring a smile — as though the dancers had collapsed from exertion and had only enough strength left for something slow and easy. The end of the work is quiet, and wistful, and unforgettable.

Suite from *Cinderella* **SERGEI PROKOFIEV (1891-1953)**

Composed in 1941-1944.

Ballet premiered on November 21, 1945 in Moscow, conducted by Yuri Fayer.

Contes de ma Mère l'Oye — "*Tales of Mother Goose*" — Charles Perrault's 1697 collection that gave classic form to *Cinderella*, *Puss-in-Boots*, *Bluebeard*, *Little Red Riding Hood* and many other popular narratives, is one of the most enduring and influential of all literary classics. Perrault's "fairy tales" are, of course, the essential stuff of children's literature, but their spell has also held powerful sway over many who have left childhood behind in years but not in spirit — these stories have probably inspired more musical settings than any secular texts except those of Shakespeare. *Cinderella* has been among the most frequently used of these tales, serving as the basis for operas by Rossini (*La Cenerentola*), Massenet (*Cendrillon*), Wolf-Ferrari (*La Cenerentola*), Leo Blech (*Aschenbrödel*) and a half-dozen others, a ballet by Frederic d'Erlanger, a symphonic suite by Eugen d'Albert, an orchestral fantasy by Eric Coates and a musical by Rodgers & Hammerstein. *Cinderella's* popularity in Russia was confirmed by the quick success there of Rossini's opera (the country had little distinctive cultivated musical tradition until the middle of the 19th century, relying until then almost exclusively on Italian and French imports to supply its concert halls and opera houses), by an elaborate pantomime ballet (whose composer is now unknown) based on the story used to open the Moscow Bolshoi Theater in 1825, and by the fact that Tchaikovsky considered it in 1869 as the basis for his first ballet. (Tchaikovsky's project never got beyond a few now-lost sketches, though nearly twenty years later he composed the ballet *Sleeping Beauty* on another of Perrault's tales.)

Immediately after the belated triumph in Russia of his *Romeo and Juliet* with its production by the Kirov Ballet in Leningrad in 1940, Prokofiev was commissioned by that company to write another full-length ballet; *Cinderella* was suggested as the topic. Prokofiev jumped at the idea (this was to be his sixth ballet, following *Ali and Lolly* [source of the *Scythian Suite*], *Chout*, *Pas d'Acier*, *L'Enfant prodigue*, *Sur le Borysthène* and *Romeo and Juliet* — *The Stone Flower* followed in 1950), and he began the piece early the following year. He worked quickly, and had largely finished the first two acts in short score by early summer. Then, however, bitter reality burst into his fantasy world. "On 22nd June [1941]," he recalled in later years, "on a warm, sunny morning, I was installed at my work table. Suddenly, the watchman's wife appeared and asked me if it was true that the Germans were attacking us and bombing our towns. The news staggered me. We went to [Sergei] Eisenstein's place [the director of *Alexander Nevsky*, with whom Prokofiev had developed a close association after writing the score for that monumental film], and discovered that it was perfectly true. On 22nd June, 1941, the German Fascists attacked Soviet Russia." Under the circumstance, *Cinderella* seemed frivolous and unpatriotic, and Prokofiev put the score away in favor of work on some military marches and an opera based on *War and Peace*, Tolstoy's epic that uses an earlier European invasion of Russia as its

backdrop. Prokofiev and other artists were evacuated to the relative safety of Nalchik in the Caucasus Mountains and then to Tiflis, the capital of Georgia, for the next two years, where, in addition to *War and Peace*, he composed his well-known Seventh Piano Sonata, the Sonata for Flute and Piano and the music for Eisenstein's movie *Ivan the Terrible*. The difficulty of the war years, however, had not expunged *Cinderella* from the Kirov's plans, and in 1943 Prokofiev was invited to join the company at its temporary home in Perm. Despite the cramped conditions and personnel limitations in Perm, the Kirov was still staging productions (Khachaturian's *Gayne* had been premiered there the preceding December), and its administrators told Prokofiev that they would like to mount his ballet before the end of the year. He worked throughout the summer in close collaboration with the librettist Nikolai Volkov and the choreographer Konstantin Sergeyev (who had danced Romeo in the Kirov's 1940 production), but the ballet proved to be too elaborate for the facilities available at Perm, and it was postponed. The orchestration was completed during the summer of 1944 at a retreat house in Ivanovo, near Moscow, where Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Glière, Miaskovsky and other important composers had been moved as the conditions of war ameliorated. *Cinderella* was premiered with great success on November 21, 1945, not by the Kirov in Leningrad, however, but by the Bolshoi in Moscow, since Galina Ulanova, the ballerina for whom the title role was created, had recently transferred from one company to the other. In a review of the premiere for *Pravda*, Shostakovich praised the work as being "worthy of the glorious tradition of Russian ballet"; Prokofiev received the Stalin Prize for it in 1946. The Kirov gave *Cinderella* in a new production in April 1946 in honor of the composer's 55th birthday, and it was introduced to American audiences three years later by the Sadler's Wells Company.

"The main thing I wanted to convey in the music of *Cinderella*," wrote Prokofiev, "was the poetic love of Cinderella and the Prince — the inception and flowering of the emotion, the obstacles in its way, the realization of a dream. A major role in my work on *Cinderella* was played by the fairy-tale nature of the subject, which faced me as the composer with a number of interesting problems — the mysteriousness of the good grandmother fairy, the fantasy of the twelve dwarfs leaping at midnight from the clock and beating out a tap-dance reminding Cinderella to return home, the swift alternation of the countries of the world visited by the Prince in search of Cinderella, the vivid and poetic breath of nature in the figures of the four fairies of the seasons of the year and their attendants. But the authors of the ballet wanted the onlooker to see living, feeling, experiencing people in this fairy-tale setting. N. Volkov and I devoted a great deal of attention to the dramatic side of the ballet. The music characterizes Cinderella in three themes. The first theme is the mistreated Cinderella; the second, the Cinderella of purity and day-dreams; the third — an expansive theme — is Cinderella in love and happy. I endeavored to express in music the characters of the gentle and dreaming Cinderella, of her timid father, of her nagging stepmother, of her willful, sneering sisters, of the ardent young Prince, so that the onlooker would not remain indifferent to their adversities and joys. Besides the dramatic structure, it was very important to me that the ballet *Cinderella* should be most danceable, that the dances should flow from the design of the plot, be varied, and that the artists in the ballet should have sufficient measure of opportunity to dance and display their art. I wrote *Cinderella* in the traditions of the old classical ballet; it contains a pas-de-deux, an adagio, a gavotte, several waltzes, a pavane, a passepied, a bourrée, a mazurka, a galop. Every personage has his variation. Although the fairy tale of Cinderella is found among many peoples, I wanted to take it up as a genuine Russian fairy story."

More than just a children's story or a bit of theatrical escapism, *Cinderella* touches on deeper meanings and more universal themes. The librettist Nikolai Volkov said that "new images of the Prince and the drudge [Cinderella] rose before my eyes. The Prince acquired the features of a passionate and impetuous youth who longed to escape from the confining influence of the stagnant court life.... In our imagination, Cinderella was shrouded in the mists of dreams, a girl who lived on the foretaste of love. The result of this interpretation of the chief characters was that the ballet acquired the features of a love story. The fairy tale, while preserving its mood of fantasy, was filled with a psychological and lyrical content." In his biography of Prokofiev, Israel V. Nestyev wrote, "The underlying idea of the ballet is Cinderella's modesty, industry and spiritual purity over the greed, heartlessness and crass arrogance of her stepmother and stepsisters. Following the original story, the cruel characters are derided and humbled, and the good Cinderella is chosen by the Prince. Pure love is the central theme of both the libretto and the music of the ballet."

As with other of his theater works, Prokofiev extracted excerpts from *Cinderella* for independent concert performance. In 1942 and 1943, even before the work was finished, he issued two sets of piano pieces (Op. 95 and Op. 97) based on the ballet's music. In 1946 he arranged three orchestral suites (Op. 107-109) from the complete score which he said "are not a simple mechanical collection of numbers; much of them was rewritten and displayed in a new, symphonic guise." He also arranged another set of piano pieces from the ballet (Op. 102), transcribed its *Adagio* for cello and piano (Op. 97b), and included three of its movements in a suite of orchestral waltzes (Op. 110).

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