

Concerts of October 10 and 11, 2014

Notes on the Program by Ken Meltzer

OVERTURE TO *THE MAGIC FLUTE*, K. 620

Composed in 1791

The first performance of *The Magic Flute* took place in Vienna, at the Theater auf der Wieden, on September 30, 1791.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Born in Salzburg, Austria, on January 27, 1756

Died in Vienna, Austria, on December 5, 1791

The first performance of this work by the Charlotte Symphony took place on May 3, 1935 with Guillermo S. de Roxlo conducting at Alexander Graham Middle School. The sixteenth and most recent performance took place on January 27, 2011 at Carmel Country Club with Jacomo Bairos, conducting.

In the final year of his tragically brief life, Mozart composed two full-length operas—*Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*), K. 620, and *La clemenza di Tito* (*The Clemency of Titus*), K. 621. *The Magic Flute* is based upon a story by Jakob August Liebeskind. The Prince Tamino and Princess Pamina, aided by a magic flute, are able to survive extraordinary trials and enter the Temple presided over by the High Priest, Sarastro. Emanuel Schikaneder, manager of the Vienna Theater auf der Wieden (and like Mozart, a Mason), authored the opera's libretto. Schikaneder also sang the lead comic role of the bird catcher, Papageno, in *The Magic Flute*'s premiere.

The Magic Flute is in the form of a *Singspiel*, a then-popular form of light opera that alternates musical numbers and spoken dialogue. It is a testament to Mozart's genius that he was able to transform this comic genre (as well as the rather convoluted fairy-tale plot) into a work of transcendent beauty and eloquence. *The Magic Flute* is a sublime masterpiece and the fitting—albeit premature—culmination of Mozart's incomparable genius in operatic composition.

The Overture to *The Magic Flute* begins with a slow introduction (*Adagio*). The orchestra proclaims a series of three majestic chords, associated in the opera with the Temple and its High Priest, Sarastro. The solemn introduction finally yields to the principal *Allegro*, and the second violins' introduction of the scurrying, principal theme. The theme receives contrapuntal treatment before resolving to a joyous, *forte* proclamation by the ensemble. Mozart introduces a series of subsidiary themes, all related to the opening of the *Allegro*. At the conclusion of the exposition, the three chords return (*Adagio*). After a minor-key development section (*Allegro*), the second

violins launch the recapitulation of the central themes. The Overture concludes with a spirited coda, once again capped by three chords.

The score calls for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, and strings.

Durations: ca. 7 minutes

CONCERTO NO. 2 FOR PIPA AND ORCHESTRA

Composed in 2013

The first performance of the Pipa Concerto No. 2 took place in Sydney, Australia, on October 30, 2013, with Wu Man, soloist and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra under Jessica Cottis, conductor.

ZHAO JIPING

Born in Pingliang, Gansu, China, in August 1945

These Charlotte Symphony performances mark the North Carolina premiere of the concerto.

In 2012 I was approached by the pipa virtuoso, Wu Man, to write a concerto. Having known and admired Wu Man for many years, I was immediately taken by the prospect and, in fact, had been intending to write something that could feature her incredible artistry. This is my second concerto for pipa, an instrument that resonates so closely to my heart.

This concerto was composed in the summer of 2013 in Xi'an, China, and was commissioned by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra for Wu Man. Wu Man has accumulated a wealth of playing experience, and has a unique perspective on the interpretation of music, particularly on the integration of eastern sounds with western ensembles. I see the piece not so much as a Western traditional concerto, but more an exploration of poetic expression of thoughts and emotions, able to stimulate many levels of the audience's imagination. The orchestra and Wu Man are the canvas and I have the privilege to paint the picture.

I am delighted that a number of orchestras will be playing this concerto during its premiere season. A few years ago I was fortunate to hear a concert of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, who are the lead commissioner, and was immediately struck by the virtuosity of the musicians. With that sound in mind my goal was to create a pipa concerto with a strong Chinese flavor combined with global musical language sense. The movements represent various expressions, in different textures and tempos, inspired by the most elegant Chinese traditional

music style *Ping Tang* (□□) from Wu Man's hometown Su Hong (□□) area. I am confident that this powerful collaboration will touch a new light!

—Zhao Jiping

In addition to the solo pipa, the score calls for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, percussion, harp, and strings.

Duration: ca. 25 minutes

Symphony No. 4 in C minor, D. 417 (“Tragic”)

Composed in 1816

The first public performance of the Symphony No. 4 took place in Leipzig, Germany, on November 19, 1849, with August Ferdinand Riccius conducting the Euterpe Society.

FRANZ SCHUBERT

Born in Vienna, Austria, on January 31, 1797

Died in Vienna, Austria on November 19, 1828

The first and only previous performance set of this work by the Charlotte Symphony took place on May 21-24, 2003 with Christof Perick conducting in community neighborhood locations.

Franz Schubert was 19 years old when, on April 27, 1816, he completed his Fourth Symphony. At the time, Schubert was employed (and none too happily) as an assistant master at his father's Säulengasse school. Despite the responsibilities of attending to the school's youngest pupils, Schubert managed to find time for his musical pursuits. Compositions from 1815 and 1816 include numerous songs, operas, sacred works for chorus and orchestra, chamber music, and symphonies.

None of Schubert's Symphonies was performed in public during the composer's lifetime (it is possible that the Fourth Symphony received a private performance at the home of one of Schubert's friends). The first public performance of the Fourth Symphony took place on the 21st anniversary of the composer's death. On November 19, 1849, Ferdinand Riccius conducted the Euterpe Musical Society in a Leipzig concert.

Some time after the completion of his Fourth Symphony, Schubert added the nickname “Tragic.” It is a characterization that has caused, perhaps, more than its share of controversy. The Fourth is the first of only two Schubert Symphonies based in a minor key (the other is the famous Symphony No. 8, the “Unfinished”). And certainly, Schubert's Symphony No. 4 offers moments of considerable tension and drama, particularly in comparison to its three predecessors. The distinguished Schubert scholar,

Brian Newbould, views the Schubert Fourth Symphony as a throwback to the *Sturm und Drang* (“Storm and Stress”) works of the 18th century.

Other commentators have suggested that overall, the Schubert Fourth lacks the kind of gravity one might associate with, for example, Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, or a Shakespeare tragedy. Perhaps that is so. Nevertheless, the debate over the Symphony’s nickname should not obscure the considerable achievements of the young Franz Schubert. His Fourth Symphony would do credit to a composer with a lifetime of experience. The fact that Schubert completed this work less than three months after his nineteenth birthday is testament to his unique genius.

I. *Adagio molto; Allegro vivace*—The Symphony opens with an extended and brooding slow introduction (*Adagio molto*). The first violins launch the ensuing *Allegro vivace* with a *piano* introduction of the mercurial first principal theme, soon resolving to a *forte* orchestral outburst. The flowing second theme, again introduced by the first violins, provides lyrical contrast. A joyous statement by the orchestra serves to conclude the exposition. Drama returns in the brief development section, based upon the *Allegro vivace*’s opening theme. The first violins launch the recapitulation of the central themes, finally leading to an exuberant C-Major conclusion.

II. *Andante*—The violins offer a *dolce* melody, whose beauty reminds us of Schubert’s genius as one of the greatest of song composers. A brusque *sforzando* chord launches a contrasting, agitated episode. The two episodes return in sequence. The final portion of the movement incorporates elements from both episodes, as the *Andante* proceeds to a peaceful resolution.

III. *Menuetto. Allegro vivace*—The ensemble immediately launches the vigorous, central *Menuetto*. The ensuing *Trio* section, featuring the winds, is far more serene. The movement concludes with a reprise of the *Menuetto*.

IV. *Allegro*—After four introductory measures, the first violins introduce the finale’s restless opening theme. The gentle second theme is presented in the form of a dialogue between the violins and winds. As in the opening movement, the exposition proceeds to a cheerful close. The start of the development, with its hushed dynamics and frequent pauses, is remarkably subdued. Toward the conclusion, however, the mood becomes far more agitated. When the recapitulation arrives, the opening theme has been transformed from the minor to the major key. High spirits predominate to the Symphony’s C-Major finish.

The score calls for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings.

Duration: ca. 31 minutes