

QCSO Program Notes

Masterworks III: Schumann Piano Concerto

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Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Orchestral Suite No. 3, BWV 1068

Instrumentation: Two oboes, three trumpets, timpani, strings, and continuo.

Premiere: Unknown.

QCSO Performance History: The QCSO has performed this suite in its entirety once before: in 1984, conducted by James Dixon. The second movement, or the “Celebrated Air” (later transposed and published as “Air on the G String”) has been much more frequently featured. Conductor Oscar Anderson led a number of performances in honor of recently-deceased musicians, including in 1942 (in memory of Frederick Stock, former maestro of the Chicago Symphony), 1946 (in memory of Tri-City Symphony double bassist David Bleuer and timpanist John Peshinski), and in 1947 (in memory of Hilda Matthey, who seems to have been a local singer). The Air was also performed on a chamber concert in 2011 (conducted by Mark Russell Smith) marking the retirement of concertmaster Allen Ohmes, and most recently in 2024, again conducted by Mark Russell Smith.



Leipzig entrepreneur Gottfried Zimmermann (1677-1741) made his fortune by importing guilty pleasures: coffee, tea, sugar, and tobacco. Naturally, any such businessman would seek an opportunity to turn a double profit by bringing such enjoyments directly to the public, so he created Café Zimmermann on Leipzig’s fashionable Katherinestrasse, not far from the bustling University of Leipzig. This café, along with a summer venue he maintained outside the city gates, became popular social destinations for the city’s vibrant merchant class. Zimmermann also gained a reputation as supporter of the arts, hosting musical ensembles at his venues at no cost. His reasons for doing so were not entirely charitable: concerts brought in the coffee-buying public, and twice as many customers than usual, as by law women were allowed in the coffee houses only during public concerts.

Among the ensembles that regularly performed at Café Zimmermann was the highly-regarded Collegium Musicum, founded by composer Georg Phillip Telemann in 1701 while he was a law student at the university. Like similar amateur ensembles elsewhere, the Collegium was an alliance of gifted amateur musicians who performed regular public concerts, often sight-reading contemporary works. By around 1723, Telemann’s successor Georg Balthazar Schott began offering Collegium concerts at Café Zimmermann from 8:00-10:00 P.M. Summer concerts were

in his outdoor venue on Wednesdays from 4:00-6:00 P.M.

Meanwhile, 45 miles away, organist and composer Johann Sebastian Bach had soured on his court appointment in Köthen. His patron Prince Leopold was a music lover and had enthusiastically commissioned many of Bach's works, including the famed Brandenburg Concertos. But, as Bach explained later in a letter to a friend, "the impression should arise that the musical inclinations of the said Prince had become somewhat lukewarm, especially as the new Princess" – that is, Princess Frederica Henriette, "was *amusa*," i.e., "anti-muse", or emphatically uninterested in music. In his search for a new appointment, Bach saw in Leipzig many favorable features: the prestigious St. Thomas School for the education of his sons, the vibrant church music programs at Leipzig's four churches, and a lively middle class full of music lovers that kept places like Café Zimmermann busy.

Six years into his post in Leipzig, Bach succeeded Schott as director of the Collegium Musicum, and it provided an avenue for his major non-ecclesial works of this period, including the famous Coffee Cantata (which included the text, "If I couldn't, three times a day, be allowed to drink my little cup of coffee, in my anguish I will turn into a shriveled-up roast goat.") Though we lack specific documentary information, it is most likely that Orchestral Suite No. 3 was first performed at Café Zimmermann by the Collegium Musicum under the composer's direction. What we are left to wonder entirely is how the first crowd of coffee-drinkers received the work at its first performance. Was it a Friday Winter concert or part of the Wednesday night Summer series? Was Zimmermann himself present, and was it a profitable evening at his venue? Did the first performance of the slow movement, or what would come to be known as "Air on the G String", bring tears to those first listeners like

it does to wedding guests well into the twenty-first century?

Listening Guide

I. Overture

- **Rhythm:** This majestic opening is marked with frequent slow dotted rhythms (a long note, followed by a shorter one). Notice how Bach uses steadier, faster notes intermittently to connect these dotted figures.

II. Air

- **Texture:** Although the glorious melody which predominates throughout is designed to hold our attention, the beautiful walking bass line is worthy of our attention as well, a perfect complement to one of Bach's most beloved melodies.
- **Form:** Like almost every other suite movement, this one is in binary form, divided into two main sections; the first is played and repeated, then the second is played and repeated (AABB).

III. Gavotte

- **Rhythm:** A gavotte is a moderately fast dance distinguished by its two strong upbeats.

IV. Bourée

- **Tempo:** The bourée is likewise a Baroque dance, but is generally quicker in tempo than the gavotte and has only a one-beat pickup.

V. Gigue

- **Meter:** "Gigue" is a German form of jig (as in Irish jig). Unlike the other movements in this suite, a gigue is in "compound meter", where beats are divided into three parts rather than two. In other words, you can follow the beat by (silently) saying "ONE-and-uh-TWO-and-uh" to yourself, rather than "ONE-and-TWO-and."

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)
Piano Concerto in A minor, Op.
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Instrumentation: Two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, solo piano, and strings.

Premiere: December 4, 1845, Dresden, with Clara Schumann as soloist and Ferdinand Hiller conducting.

QCSO Performance History: This is the sixth time Schumann's concerto has been performed in its entirety on QCSO Masterworks concerts; previous performances were given in 1928 (Richard Buhlig/Ludwig Becker), 1938 (Eugene List/Oscar Anderson), 1982 (Rudolf Firkusny/James Dixon), 1993 (Stephen Hough/James Dixon), 2005 (Alon Goldstein/Donald Schleicher). Additionally, soloist Ruth Webster performed the first movement only in 1931, with Ludwig Becker conducting.



J. S. Bach was certainly not the last composer to find a productive home in Leipzig. In 1828, young Robert Schumann moved to Leipzig from his hometown of Zwickau to study law at the university, as Telemann had done more than a century before. Not long into his studies, Schumann fell into the musical circle around virtuoso pianist and teacher Friedrich Weick and abandoned his university studies for a career in music. It was in Leipzig that he fell in love with Weick's extraordinarily talented daughter, Clara, and where he eventually fought his legal battle with Clara's father in order to marry her. Following their marriage in 1840, Robert and Clara settled in Leipzig, where she could continue her illustrious career as a pianist and he could continue to establish himself as a leading composer and music journalist. Both joined the faculty of the newly-established Leipzig Conservatory of Music at the invitation of its founder, Felix Mendelssohn, yet another composer who thrived in the lively musical scene in Leipzig.

Less than a year after their wedding, Clara performed the world premiere of Robert's new single-movement work for piano and orchestra, the *Phantasie* in A minor, with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. As she would many times in her life, she proved herself to be Robert's most brilliant interpreter and enthusiastic advocate. "It is a magnificent piece," she wrote, "full of spirit and freshness." She encouraged him to expand the work into a full, three-movement concerto. He eventually took her advice, and Clara premiered his complete concerto four years later in Dresden, where Robert had taken up a new position to support their growing family. Shortly after the Dresden premiere, Mendelssohn conducted a performance of the complete work in Leipzig, again with Clara as soloist.

Listening Guide

I. Allegro Affettuoso ("Cheerful")

- **Melody:** The crashing gesture at the opening of this movement was reportedly an inspiration to Edvard Grieg, who began his own A minor piano concerto in a similar manner.
- **Technique:** The Schumanns, along with their close friend Johannes Brahms, were artistically opposed to ostentatious displays of piano technique like those made famous by Franz Liszt. "Before Liszt, people used to play; after Liszt, they pounded or whispered," Clara Schumann once said. "He has the decline of the piano on his conscience." Accordingly, Robert is careful to place the pianist as an artistic collaborator with the orchestra, and avoids empty virtuosity in the piano part.

II. Intermezzo: Andantino Grazioso

- **Texture:** Several passages of this slow movement make haunting use of silence, especially in the moments leading into the final movement.

III. Allegro Vivace

- **Harmony:** Schumann had wanted to write a piano concerto in A minor since he was a young man, even mentioning the idea to his future father-in-law Friedrich Weick. Having extended the single movement to a full-length work, Schumann chose the sunny "parallel" key of A major for the work's festive and amiable closing movement.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)
Symphony No. 41 in C major,
K. 551, “Jupiter”

Instrumentation: Flute, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings.

Premiere: Unknown.

QCSO Performance History: The QCSO previously “Jupiter” on Masterworks concerts in 1918 (conducted by Ludwig Becker, movements 1 and 2 only), 1932 (again led by Becker, movement 4 only), 1951 (conducted by Harry John Brown), 1990 (conducted by James Dixon), and in 2009 (conducted by Mark Russell Smith).



Mozart’s last three symphonies were all written in the summer of 1788, about three and a half years before his death, and it’s likely that none were publicly performed during his lifetime. Some historians believe that these symphonies were written for a proposed concert series in Vienna to be hosted in a new casino owned by one Philip Otto (probably a figure similar to Leipzig’s Zimmermann, of café fame). But even though Mozart apparently had tickets printed for these occasions, no evidence exists that they ever occurred. And he

had little opportunity to focus on procuring performances of these symphonies, or writing additional ones, given his recent career developments. Just following the completion of these symphonies, he was appointed to the imperial court as composer of chamber music following the death of Christoph Willibald Gluck, and he faced high public demand for new operatic works following the brilliant success of 1787’s *Don Giovanni*. Thus Mozart’s last contributions to the symphonic repertoire were latent treasures left to be discovered following his untimely death in 1791.

Early listeners and critics lauded Symphony No. 39 in E-flat major for its “grace and felicity” (composer Hector Berlioz) and Symphony No. 40 in G minor as “dramatic, urgent, and gripping” (nineteenth century theorist Adolf Bernhard Marx). But No. 41 in C Major was praised most of all for what some called its “science”, the incredible use of counterpoint, especially in the symphony’s final movement. Sir George Grove, the first author of the authoritative *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians*) said that Symphony No. 41 was “not merely a masterpiece; it is a miracle of art, one of the most perfect pieces of music ever conceived by the mind of man.”

Impressions of Symphony No. 41 as grandiose and herculean are reflected in its common moniker “Jupiter”, the Roman king of the gods. As is often the case with such descriptive subtitles, this did not originate with the composer, but was added sometime later, possibly by British impresario Johann Peter Salomon.

Listening Guide

I. Allegro Vivace

- **Affect:** Against the roiling and forceful opening gesture, Mozart carefully juxtaposes less mighty, more genteel motives. The broad range of musical moods is deeply arresting to listeners; it’s hard to predict which “character”

Mozart will spotlight next.

II. Andante Cantabile

- **Rhythm:** The opening melody in this slow movement lacks an accompaniment, so it can seem to float aimlessly. But after the first phrase, Mozart uses all kinds of rhythmic figures to keep the evolving melody moving forward.

III. Minuet and Trio: Allegretto

- **Form:** As always in a symphonic dance movement, this movement's middle section ("Trio") is of a divergent character. To contrast the main minuet's stately decorum, this trio begins with a hesitating motive in the oboes and first violins, before being rudely interrupted with somewhat angry chords in the rest of the orchestra.

IV. Molto Allegro

- **Texture:** This vivacious movement includes five separate melodies, followed by one of Mozart's crowning achievements of counterpoint: a fugue that integrates all five.

Yefim Bronfman, piano



Internationally recognized as one of today's most acclaimed and admired pianists, Yefim Bronfman stands among a handful of artists regularly sought by festivals, orchestras, conductors and recital series. His commanding technique, power and exceptional lyrical gifts are consistently acknowledged by the press and audiences alike.

Following summer festival appearances in Vail, Tanglewood and Aspen the 25/26 season begins with an extensive recital and orchestral tour in Asia including China, Japan and South Korea. In Europe Bronfman can be heard with orchestras in London, Kristiansand, Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam, Dresden and on tour with Israel Philharmonic. A special trio project with Anne-Sophie Mutter and Pablo Ferrandez will continue with

performances in Switzerland, Spain, Germany and France in the fall of 2025. With orchestras in North America he returns to New York, Rochester, Cleveland (in Miami), Pittsburgh, Kansas City, Montreal and in recital, Bronfman can be heard in Prague, Milan, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, Orange County, Charlottesville and Toronto.

Mr. Bronfman works regularly with an illustrious group of conductors, including Daniel Barenboim, Herbert Blomstedt, Semyon Bychkov, Riccardo Chailly, Christoph von Dohnányi, Gustavo Dudamel, Charles Dutoit, Daniele Gatti, Valery Gergiev, Alan Gilbert, Vladimir Jurowski, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, Andris Nelsons, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Sir Simon Rattle, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Jaap Van Zweden, Franz Welser-Möst, and David Zinman. Summer engagements have regularly taken him to the major festivals of Europe and the US. Always keen to explore chamber music repertoire, his partners have included Pinchas Zukerman, Martha Argerich, Magdalena Kožená, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Emmanuel Pahud and many others. In 1991 he gave a series of joint recitals with Isaac Stern in Russia, marking Mr. Bronfman's first public performances there since his emigration to Israel at age 15.

Widely praised for his solo, chamber and orchestral recordings, Mr. Bronfman has been nominated for 6 GRAMMY® Awards, winning in 1997 with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic for their recording of the three Bartok Piano Concerti. His prolific catalog of recordings includes works for two pianos by Rachmaninoff and Brahms with Emanuel Ax, the complete Prokofiev concerti with the Israel Philharmonic and Zubin Mehta, a Schubert/Mozart disc with the Zukerman Chamber Players and the soundtrack to Disney's *Fantasia 2000*. His

most recent CD releases are the 2014 GRAMMY® nominated Magnus Lindberg's Piano Concerto No. 2 commissioned for him and performed by the New York Philharmonic conducted by Alan Gilbert on the Da Capo label; Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No.1 with Mariss Jansons and the Bayerischer Rundfunk; a recital disc, Perspectives, complementing Mr. Bronfman's designation as a Carnegie Hall 'Perspectives' artist for the 2007-08 season; and recordings of all the Beethoven piano concerti as well as the Triple Concerto together with violinist Gil Shaham, cellist Truls Mørk, and the Tönhalle Orchestra Zürich under David Zinman for the Arte Nova/BMG label.

Now available on DVD are his performances of Liszt's second piano concerto with Franz Welser-Möst and the Vienna Philharmonic from Schoenbrunn, 2010 on Deutsche Grammophon; Beethoven's fifth piano concerto with Andris Nelsons and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra from the 2011 Lucerne Festival; Rachmaninoff's third concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic and Sir Simon Rattle on the EuroArts label and both Brahms Concerti with Franz Welser-Möst and The Cleveland Orchestra (2015).

Born in Tashkent in the Soviet Union, Yefim Bronfman immigrated to Israel with his family in 1973, where he studied with pianist Arie Vardi, head of the Rubin Academy of Music at Tel Aviv University. In the United States, he studied at The Juilliard School, Marlboro School of Music, and the Curtis Institute of Music, under Rudolf Firkusny, Leon Fleisher, and Rudolf Serkin. A recipient of the prestigious Avery Fisher Prize, one of the highest honors given to American instrumentalists, in 2010 he was further honored as the recipient of the Jean Gimbel Lane prize in piano

performance from Northwestern University and in 2015 with an honorary doctorate from the Manhattan School of Music.