

Civic Orchestra of Tucson
Program Notes
March 19 and 20, 2022

Concerto for Flute and Harp in C Major, K. 297

Wolfgang A. Mozart

Perhaps the whole world knows the name “Mozart” and perhaps many of the 7.7 billion inhabitants, at least those in the western world, may even know a tune or two. (Eine kleine Nachtmusik?) I doubt, however, that few of us understand the breadth of production of this “wunderkind” who passed at the tragically young age of 35 years. Just imagine: 41 symphonies, 55 concertos (27 for piano), 22 musical dramas (including opera and other stage works), hours of chamber music, and nearly countless other works in all manner of formats. Astounding!

Yet the concerto on this weekend’s program may be the only time the genius ever included harp in one of his compositions! Astounding!

In 1788 (at age 22) while living in Paris, Mozart composed this lovely concerto for Flute and Harp in C Major, K. 299. Mozart had been giving composition lessons to Marie-Louise-Philippine Bonnières, youngest daughter of the Duke of Guînes. The duke, whom Mozart found to be an excellent flutist, commissioned Mozart to compose a concerto he could perform with his daughter, a harpist. What a happy occasion for the musical world since.

The concerto is in three movements:

Allegro The orchestra states two themes, the first being immediately present and the second introduced by the horn. Both themes fall under the conventional Sonata Form. The soli then re-work the already present themes.

Andantino The short phrases in this movement are introduced by the strings and become lyrically extended. This further develops into four variations on the theme. The cadenza in this movement, by the end of the fourth variation, leads to a coda, where the orchestra and soli focus on the lyrical theme. The key is in F Major.

Rondeau – Allegro The form of this movement is: A–B–A–C–A–B–A, a typical sonata-rondo form. The only minor difference to the standard sonata-allegro form is the third appearance of the "A" theme in the parallel minor. The concerto ends with three forte C major chords.

The concerto is performed with a reduced string section plus two oboes and horns, as Mozart intended.

Symphony No 5, Opus 47, in D minor

Dmitri Shostakovich

“Shostakovich’s career as the most publicized and most provocative composer in the Soviet Union has been meteoric. He rose as high as any musician could in the Soviet Union, only to fall into sudden disgrace. He was able to recover his high station, once again, to become an object of honor and admiration, but only to be discredited a second time. These fluctuations in Shostakovich’s fortunes have had little relation to the quality or kind of music he was writing. He was only—as Nicolas Slonimsky pointed out—the barometer of political current in the Soviet music. Whenever the line changes, Shostakovich is made the prime target of either praise or vehement denunciation.”

Milton Cross
Encyclopedia of the Great Composers and Their Music
(1953)

Shostakovich crossed over in 1975, twenty-two years after these words were written, but they remained nonetheless true. Books have been written about his stormy relationship with Lenin and especially Stalin—far too complex to

approach in these notes, but there is ample recommended reading for the interested music historian or audiophile. Let it be enough to say that the 5th Symphony (1937) was a redeeming work that allowed Dmitri to return to a place of grace within the party.

In his own words Shostakovich declared, “The Theme of my symphony is the stabilization of a personality. In the center of this composition, conceived lyrically beginning to end, I saw a man with all his experiences. The Finale resolves the tragically tense impulses of the earlier movements into optimism and joy of living.”

Perhaps.

Nonetheless, albeit the clouds do part and the sun streams down in the Finale, earlier moments are often dark and foreboding, especially given the horrible conflict between liberty and tyranny in which we now find ourselves. For this writer, the crying out of humanity heard in the third movement of this work brings the suffering of the Ukrainian people to the surface. May our thoughts and prayers be with them.

The Shostakovich Symphony No. 5 is scored for 3 flutes/piccolo, 2 oboes, 3 clarinets/E flat, 3 bassoons/contrabass, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, harp, piano, celeste, and a large battery in the percussion section. It is performed in four movements:

- I. Moderato
- II. Allegretto
- III. Largo
- IV. Allegro non troppo

Notes by Charles Bontrager