

M Manhattan
School of Music

MSM CHAMBER SINFONIA

Bernard Labadie (HonDMA '18), Conductor

Friday, October 25, 2019 | 7:30 PM
Neidorff-Karpati Hall

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MSM CHAMBER SINFONIA

Bernard Labadie (HonDMA '18), Conductor

PROGRAM

JOSEPH HAYDN
(1732–1809)

Symphony No. 103 in E-flat Major, Hob. I:103
("Drum Roll")

Adagio; Allegro con spirito
Andante più tosto allegretto
Menuet
Allegro con spirito

Intermission

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
(1756–1791)

Symphony No. 40 in G Minor, K. 550
Molto allegro
Andante
Menuetto: Allegretto
Allegro assai

MSM CHAMBER SINFONIA

Bernard Labadie (HonDMA '18), Conductor

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* HAYDN Symphony No. 103 in E-flat Major

+ MOZART Symphony No. 40 in G Minor

PROGRAM NOTES

Symphony No. 40 in G Minor, K. 550

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Some of the most persistent myths in the history of music surround Mozart's miraculous last three symphonies: that he wrote them without practical outside stimulus, that they were never performed during his lifetime, and that he never heard them performed. Incredibly, they were composed within a three-month period in the summer of 1788—he completed the E-flat major Symphony on June 26 just four days after he had completed the Piano Trio, K. 542; the present G minor on July 25 just eleven days after the Piano Trio, K. 548; and the *Jupiter Symphony* on August 10.

The idea that no specific occasion inspired these symphonies arose out of the lack of corroborating documents. Mozart's informative correspondence with his father had ceased when Leopold died the previous year, nor was he on the best of terms with his sister, another potential source of information. Furthermore, symphonies were rarely identified specifically in concert announcements at the time, and Mozart's many private concerts were not even announced publicly.

After painstakingly sifting the evidence, Mozart scholars have argued conclusively that it would have gone utterly against Mozart's practice to compose anything without a commission, planned performance, or financially productive publication in mind. Further, occasions actually did exist for which the symphonies were likely written: a verifiable concert series in 1788, a projected visit to London the following year, a 1789 tour of Germany after the London trip fell through, and concerts he gave in Frankfurt and Mainz in 1790. The existence of manuscript orchestral parts in various European libraries also indicates performances during Mozart's lifetime. Finally, the G minor Symphony itself offers evidence of performance in that Mozart composed an alternate version, adding two clarinets and rescoring the existing oboe parts. He certainly would not have bothered without a performance in view.

The beloved Romantic notion that Mozart composed his crowning symphonic trilogy out of inner compulsion—"art for art's sake"—dies hard. This was the time of his heartbreaking pleas to Michael Puchberg for money, his distressing lack of recognition in Vienna, and his dismal financial returns from concerts, tours, publishers, and visits to royalty. Mozart's desperate financial situation lent a special intensity to the myth, which has now finally been laid to rest.

Much has been made of the “tragic” demeanor of the G minor Symphony in view of Mozart’s dire straits, though we know to be wary of such biographic links. G minor was the key he used for Constanze’s aria “Traurigkeit” in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and Pamina’s aria “Ah, ich fühl’s” in *Die Zauberflöte*, works in which the text confirms the notions of sorrow and despair. Commentators have also found such emotional qualities in his purely instrumental G minor works—the “Little” G minor Symphony, the Piano Quartet, K. 478, and the String Quintet, K. 516.

Schumann, on the other hand, invoked this Symphony, with its “buoyant Hellenic charm,” as a counterexample to the notion of G minor as a somber key. And distinguished commentator Donald Francis Tovey observed that the language of the Symphony has much to do with the conventions of comic opera.

In any case, the inspired and innovative features of the work can be appreciated from myriad viewpoints. The hushed, out-of-nowhere opening—an accompaniment soon joined by a melody—must have astonished early audiences and captivated Romantics who liked to think of music as a continuum that can be tuned into at will. The far-flung modulations of the movement, particularly the minor-mode plunge at the beginning of the development, are notable as is the second theme’s chromaticism (use of notes outside the prevailing key).

The piling up of texture, dissonance, and repeated notes in the second movement is luscious. Again Mozart employs chromaticism, both for intensification and for ornamentation. He also relies on graceful three- and two-note sighs and elegant Lombard (short-long) rhythms to vary the texture. The concise Minuet is remarkable for its three-bar phrases and its stern counterpoint, and the trio for its soaring high horns. Mozart’s explosive “rocket” figures and quickly contrasting dynamics are irresistible in the last movement, but the most astonishing passage arrives with the development, in which Mozart has been declared to have foreshadowed twelve-tone procedures. These celebrated ten measures stand out so clearly because of the unison-octave doublings and dramatic pauses. Mozart offers further drama with the driving eighth-note motion—an outgrowth of the loud answer to the “rocket” figure—which he uses to intensify the conclusion of each major thematic section.

Symphony No. 103 in E-flat Major, Hob. I:103 ("Drumroll")

Joseph Haydn

As soon as impresario and violinist Johann Peter Salomon learned of the death of Haydn's employer Prince Nicolaus Esterházy in 1790, he traveled to Esterháza to arrange the composer's first trip to London, for he rightly assumed the newly free Haydn would go along. Haydn became the toast of the town and found he had to impose limits on social demands in order to protect his health and his time for composing and rehearsing. As Salomon's composer-in-residence he presided at the keyboard for the weekly Salomon Concerts, which consisted of a remarkable variety of music: symphonies (often called overtures in the concert announcements), concertos, vocal pieces, and chamber music.

Haydn's new *London* Symphonies provided the cornerstones for these concerts. For the 1791 and 1792 seasons he wrote and premiered Symphonies Nos. 93–98 plus gave the first English performances of two he had brought with him, Nos. 91 and 92. He decided not to spend the next season in London, but composed his Symphonies Nos. 99–101 for the 1794 season. Despite their great success, Salomon had to cancel his 1795 season owing to the difficulties of hiring singers from abroad for the vocal portions of his concerts. So, Haydn composed his last three *London* Symphonies, Nos. 102–104, in 1795 for the so-called Opera Concerts, which like Salomon's series included instrumental works. This new series, which only lasted two seasons, took place in the new Concert Hall of the King's Theatre with a magnificent orchestra of sixty players—a plentiful number for the time.

The *London* Symphonies show the world-famous composer at the height of his powers, unafraid to experiment and to astound, consistently producing masterpieces for his adoring public. The second-to-last, No. 103 in E-flat major, begins unlike any other symphony in the repertoire, with an astonishing solo timpani roll, and hence it became known as the symphony "*mit dem Paukenwirbel*" (with the timpani roll). At the first performance, on the Fourth Opera Concert on March 2, 1795, this introduction with its continuing ominous passage for bassoons, cellos, and basses, reportedly "excited the deepest attention." Haydn made this opening an integral part of the predominantly lighthearted first movement by incorporating a sped-up version in the development and a dramatic recall replete with drum roll just before the fast-paced conclusion.

The slow movement presents two Eastern European folk tunes, one in C minor and one in C major, which Haydn treats in alternating variations. His concertmaster for the Opera Concerts was virtuoso violinist Giovanni Battista Viotti, for whom he wrote an extensive, florid solo in the first major-mode variation. The second minor-mode variation contrasts striking martial fanfares with calm lyrical replies. The great Haydn scholar H. C. Robbins Landon described the opening of the following major-mode variation as “toy music,” similar to that in the *Military* Symphony of the previous year, with the theme in the oboe, bubbling bassoon accompaniment, and music-box-like interjections by the flute. Just as the movement seems to wind down, a sudden modulation impishly brings on a coda full of dynamic contrasts. The forceful ending suggests the local custom of adding loud chords to encourage applause after a slow movement, but here the contrast comes well-prepared by earlier passages rather than as a tacked-on feature.

The lusty Menuet, with its quick melodic turns and snappy short-long rhythms, pauses at the end of its first phrase to admit rustic echoes before the main theme repeats. The quiet beginning of the second half brings on a wonderful piling up of first theme phrases. The trio particularly features the clarinets in its reduced texture, again introducing a rustic little horn call, which Haydn alters ingeniously to begin his second half.

In his Finale Haydn latches onto the idea of “the hunt” as symbolized by the opening horn call, which accompanies the infectious, folk-inspired main theme that gives him all the material he needs to build one of his most delightful movements. With remarkable panache an entire sonata-rondo dances by with an extensive development section, dramatic contrasts, and increasing momentum—all fashioned from his one main theme.

—Program notes ©Jane Vial Jaffe

ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR

Bernard Labadie

Currently Principal Conductor of the Orchestra of St. Luke's, Bernard Labadie has established himself worldwide as one of the preeminent conductors of the Baroque and Classical repertoire, a reputation closely tied to his work with Les Violons du Roy (for which he served as Music Director from its inception until 2014) and La Chapelle de Québec. With these ensembles he has regularly toured Canada, the U.S., and Europe, in major venues and festivals such as Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, Walt Disney Concert Hall, the Kennedy Center, the Barbican, the Concertgebouw, and the Salzburg Festival, among others.

Since his triumphant debut with the Minnesota Orchestra, Labadie has become a regular presence on the podiums of the major North American orchestras, including the Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, and Toronto symphony orchestras; the Boston, Colorado, Houston, St. Louis, and San Francisco symphonies; the Cleveland, Philadelphia, and Minnesota orchestras; the Los Angeles and New York philharmonics; the Handel & Haydn Society; the National Arts Centre Orchestra (Ottawa) and L'Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal.

In past seasons Maestro Labadie has conducted the Bayerischen Rundfunk Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Nationale de France, Academy of Ancient Music, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, BBC Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of the Collegium Vocale Ghent, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Swedish Chamber Orchestra, WDR Sinfonieorchester (Cologne), and Zurich Chamber Orchestra.

On the opera podium, Maestro Labadie has served as Artistic Director of L'Opéra de Québec and L'Opéra de Montréal. He made his Metropolitan Opera debut with Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, a work he also led at the Cincinnati Opera. Other highlights include Handel's *Orlando* with Glimmerglass Opera, Mozart's *Così fan tutte* at the Mostly Mozart Festival, Mozart's *Lucio Silla* with Santa Fe Opera, and concert versions of Handel's *Theodora and Samson*. In 2017 he made his long-awaited debut with the Canadian Opera Company, conducting *Die Zauberflöte*.

Bernard Labadie's extensive discography includes many critically acclaimed recordings on Dorian, ATMA, and Virgin Classics labels, including Handel's *Apollo e Dafne* and a collaborative recording of Mozart's Requiem with Les Violons du Roy and La Chapelle de Québec, both of which received Canada's

Juno Award. Other recordings include C.P.E. Bach's complete cello concertos with Truls Mørk and Les Violons du Roy; J. S. Bach's complete piano concertos with Alexandre Tharaud, both on Virgin Classics; and Haydn's piano concertos with Marc-Andre Hamelin as soloist, released by Hyperion.

Bernard Labadie received the Samuel de Champlain award in Paris in 2016. The Canadian government appointed him an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2005, and his home province named him a Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Québec in 2006.

The Centennial Project

Manhattan School of Music's Centennial Project was an ambitious program of improvements to the School's architecturally distinguished campus coinciding with MSM's 100th anniversary. The centerpiece of the Project was the renovation of Neidorff-Karpati Hall, MSM's principal performance space, which has been transformed into a state-of-the-art venue to showcase our talented students. Built in 1931 and designed by Shreve, Lamb & Harmon, the architects of the Empire State Building, the hall has been called "one of the Art Deco treats in the city" by the *New York Times*. The Project also included a dramatic and welcoming new campus entrance on Claremont Avenue, new practice rooms, and an expansion of the main entryway and lobby.

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