

by **Noel Morris**

Program Annotator

Flute Concerto No. 1, K. 313

In his late teens, Wolfgang Mozart served with his father as a court musician under the Archbishop of Salzburg. When he turned twenty-one, it was time for Wolfgang to fulfill his father's wish of securing a prestigious post. To that end, Leopold Mozart arranged a job-hunting trip to Germany and Paris. Leopold requested leave to accompany his famous son, but the Archbishop refused.

In September 1777, Wolfgang set out with his mother, who was instructed to keep him away from girls. For the first time, the young composer was out from under his father and quickly fell into a steamy romance with his cousin in Augsburg. The next stop was Mannheim, where he fell in love with the soprano Aloysia Weber (he'd later marry her sister). Conveniently, he met the amateur flutist Ferdinand de Jean, who hired him to write "three short, simple concertos and a couple of quartets for the flute." Distracted, young Mozart completed only two concertos, one in G Major and one in D Major.

Hoping to stay near Aloysia, he wrote to his father, "I propose to remain here and finish entirely at my leisure that music for de Jean." He explained that he could stay with the Webers for free and that Herr Weber could help schedule some concerts.

His father fired back a furious response: "Off with you to Paris!" Mozart left Mannheim, completing only two flute concertos and two quartets for flute and strings. De Jean paid him less than half his fee.

Symphonic Dances

From 1940-41, Russian composer Sergei Rachmaninov spent two summers in a Long Island hamlet.

"Imagine the joy the lucky boaters experienced drifting by at just the right time while the virtuoso was practicing in his studio near the water," wrote the Huntington Historical Society. Such was life for a composer in exile.

Rachmaninov fled his Russian homeland shortly after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, settling first in New York and later in Southern California. In general, western audiences showed less interest in his compositions but paid top dollar to see him perform as a pianist. Sadly, this wasn't the only slight to his composition career.

It started early with his First Symphony. The critics savaged the piece with such venom that he quit writing music for three years. The manuscript disappeared.

Rachmaninov recovered from the trauma of the First Symphony and wrote many other compositions until he went into exile in 1918. He lived until 1943 but wrote only six more works in that time.

He composed Symphonic Dances, his last piece, in the summer of 1940 at the seaside estate on Long Island. As was typical of the composer, he embedded its pages with secrets, little cameos that bear some personal significance. In this case, the cameos look back on fifty years of compositions. Several works make appearances, including a private reference to his long-lost First Symphony (a musical quote discovered after his death when the Symphony's orchestral parts surfaced in Leningrad). Initially, he thought of the movements as "Noon," "Twilight," and "Midnight," a reference to the periods in one's life.

Eugene Ormandy conducted the premiere in Philadelphia in 1941.

Concerto No. 3 for Violin and Orchestra

When Camille Saint-Saëns was born, Andrew Jackson was the United States President. Ground transportation involved horses, and it could take months to receive a letter.

When he died, people had cars, telephones, and Oreos; American jazz musicians were flocking to Paris, and Walt Disney was working with cel animation. The Violin Concerto No. 3 comes from the middle of Saint-Saëns's long life, between the American Civil War and the turn of the twentieth century.

Scholars consider young Saint-Saëns one of the most extraordinary child prodigies ever. Born in 1835, he wrote his first composition at three, started performing at five, and could translate Latin and Greek by seven. He was a whiz at math and physics and entered the Paris Conservatory at twelve, prompting Hector Berlioz to observe, "He knows everything but lacks inexperience."

Throughout Saint-Saëns's career, people clamored to hear him play one of his famous organ improvisations. On the side, he wrote a lot of music, including concertos that could show off various instrumentalists.

"It is virtuosity itself that I want to defend," he wrote. "It is the source of the picturesque in music; it gives the artist wings. . . The conquered difficulty is in itself a beautiful thing."

Saint-Saëns was in his early twenties when he composed his first two violin concertos, including one for his fifteen-year-old recital partner, the Spanish violin prodigy Pablo de Sarasate. Saint-Saëns wrote several violin works for his friend, including the Violin Concerto No. 3 in 1880.

Saint-Saëns credited Sarasate with showing him how to score for the violin. Sarasate premiered the Third Violin Concerto on January 2, 1881.

Symphony No. 1

Since the Napoleonic era, the Finnish people have had an 830-mile problem—their border with Russia. In 1809, they fell under the thumb of the tsar.

Initially, the Russian monarch permitted the Finns some measure of autonomy. That changed in 1899 when Nicholas II instituted a policy of Russification. With that, the Russian military began to draft Finns into service and force people to adopt the Russian language. The Finns pushed back just as Sibelius was emerging as an important composer.

Often, Sibelius's music conjures associations with the boreal forests of Scandinavia—bone-chilling and impenetrable but with a smoldering passion. Although he grew up in a Swedish-speaking household, his romance with Aino Järnefelt, daughter of a famous general, helped bring focus to his identity. Under the influence of his future father-in-law, he switched to the Finnish language and began writing music inspired by Finnish folklore. Before long, Jean Sibelius became a potent symbol of the resistance, prompting the Russians to ban performances of his anthem, *Finlandia*.

Sibelius's first attempt at writing a symphony (*Kullervo*) included chorus and vocal soloists. He based his material on the Kalevala, an epic tale from Finnish folklore, which branded him as a figure in the nationalistic movement. The piece we think of as Symphony No. 1 came along seven years later, just as the Russian tsar issued his February Manifesto to strip the Finns of their autonomy.

The First Symphony put Sibelius on the map internationally. He conducted the premiere in Helsinki in 1899 and took it on tour around Scandinavia and to a triumphant appearance at the Paris Exposition in 1900.