

MISSY MAZZOLI: *Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres)*

Notes on the Program

By Noel Morris ©2021



From the Composer:

“**S***infonia (for Orbiting Spheres)* is music in the shape of a solar system, a collection of rococo loops that twist around each other within a larger orbit. The word “sinfonia” refers to baroque works for chamber orchestra but also to the old Italian term for a hurdy-gurdy, a medieval stringed instrument with constant, wheezing drones that are cranked out under melodies played on an attached keyboard. It’s a piece that churns and roils, that inches close to the listener only to leap away at breakneck speed, in the process transforming the ensemble turns into a makeshift hurdy-gurdy, flung recklessly into space. *Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres)* was commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and later expanded for a concert with the Boulder Philharmonic.”

MISSY MAZZOLI: *Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres)*

This is an ASO premiere.

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 basoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, 1 tuba,
2 percussionists, keyboard, strings

MOZART: Violin Concerto No. 3

By the age of seventeen, Mozart's career as a child prodigy had ended. After years of touring the salons and palaces of Europe, Salzburg's favorite son settled into life as a court musician, or perhaps a court musician *plus*. Musicians were classified as servants who typically ranked below that of valet. But Mozart was a celebrity. According to biographer Otto Jahn, members of the high nobility granted him "free entry into their houses," and he counted several of them as friends, along with burghers, musicians, and merchants. During those years, he wrote music for various functions, played organ in the chapel, served as Konzertmeister in the orchestra, and gave music lessons to high-ranking ladies. In the fall of 1773, thanks to proceeds from his glittering career as a child star, he and his family moved into a fine apartment. And they had long been accustomed to having a private carriage and servants of their own.

For all his privileges, Mozart lived under the thumb of two men: his father, Leopold, and his employer, Archbishop Colloredo (the one who continually reminded Mozart of his status as a servant). The dynamic with the archbishop was complicated. Already, Leopold had pushed his luck, spending the better part of ten years on the road with his prodigious children—and it was an open secret that he had pursued a more prestigious job. But no one was more anxious to quit Salzburg than Wolfgang. After having performed for kings and queens in the most exciting musical capitals of Europe, he felt like a caged bear.

"Salzburg is no place for my talent," he complained. "In the first place, professional musicians there are not held in much consideration; and, secondly, one hears nothing, there is no theater, no opera; and even if they really wanted one, who is there to sing?" For Mozart scholars, the time spent in Salzburg is

something of a blackout period. While living on the road, Mozart and his family wrote numerous letters which have provided insight into their lives and his development. We simply know less about the works he produced in Salzburg because the correspondence dried up.

Mozart's five violin concertos are all dated 1775, when he was 19, although there is some evidence that the first of these was written in 1773. The Violin Concerto No. 3 is dated September 12, 1775.

Young Mozart was an impressive violinist, as he had been appointed Konzertmeister (the lead violinist) to the court chapel at the age of 13. After his death in 1791, an old family friend wrote to his sister, Nannerl, and shared with her a (now) famous anecdote about the 7-year-old Mozart:

We were going to play trios . . . Wolfgang asked to be allowed to play second violin. As he hadn't had any lessons yet, your Papa reproved him for his silly begging, thinking he would be unable to make anything of it. Wolfgang said: "You don't need to have taken lessons to play second violin." When your Papa insisted that he go away at once and not bother us, he began to cry, and went off in a sulk with his little fiddle. I asked that he be allowed to play alongside of me. At last your Papa said: "Play along with Herr Schachtner, then, but so softly that you can't be heard, or you'll have to go." Soon I noticed to my amazement that I was superfluous. Quietly I laid my violin aside and watched your Papa, who had tears of wonder and pleasure running down his cheeks. Little Wolfgang played through all six trios. He was so elated by our applause that he said he could play the first violin part. We let him do it for a joke, and almost died of laughter. His fingering was incorrect and improvised, but he never got stuck.

MOZART: Violin Concert No. 3

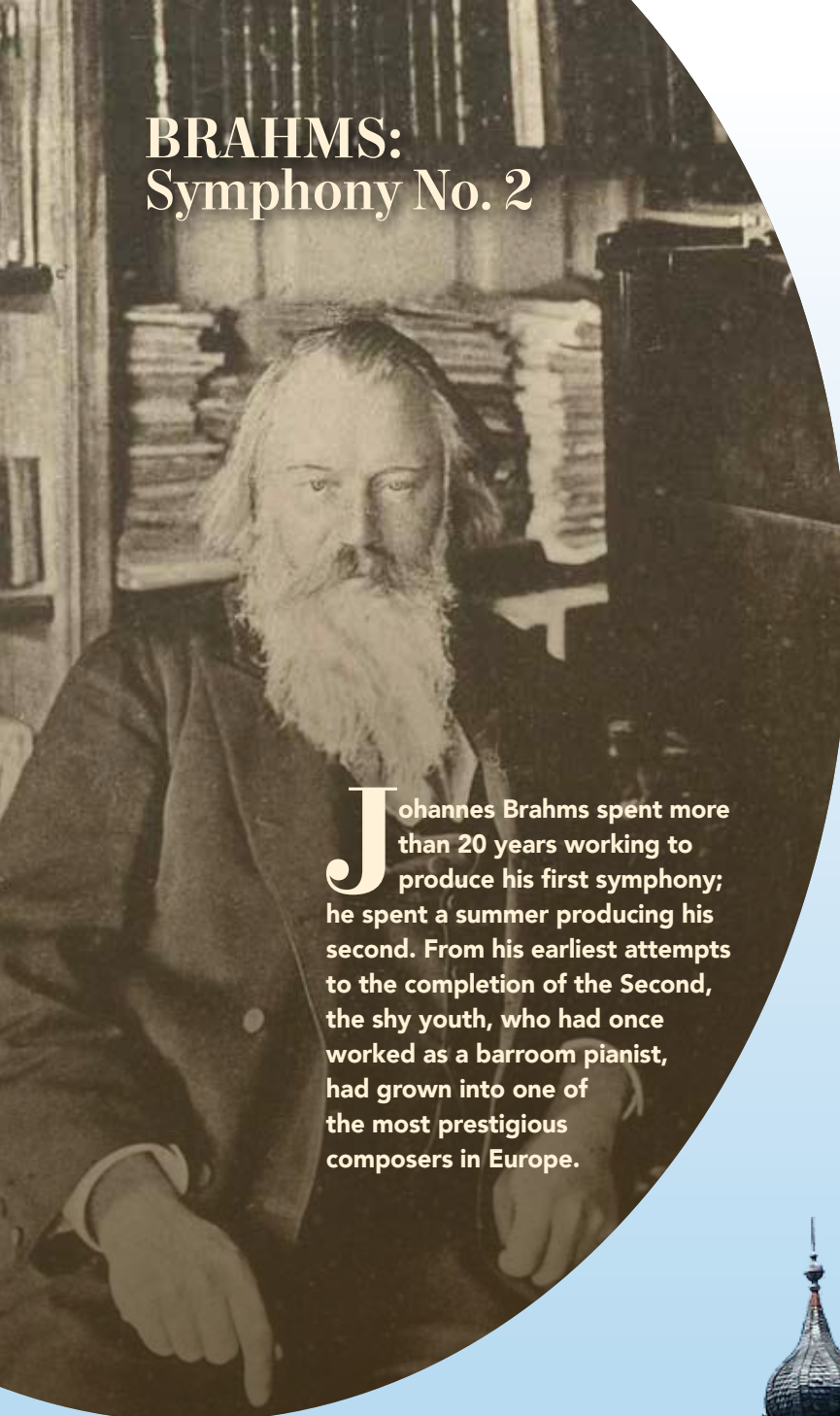
First ASO Performance: **FEB 7, 1975** | Michael Palmer, conductor | Andrew Galos, violin

Most Recent ASO Performance: **MAR 24, 2012** | Leonidas Kavakos, conductor & violin

Instrumentation: **Solo violin, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 horns, strings**

Archbishop Hieronymus von Colloredo

BRAHMS: Symphony No. 2



Johannes Brahms spent more than 20 years working to produce his first symphony; he spent a summer producing his second. From his earliest attempts to the completion of the Second, the shy youth, who had once worked as a barroom pianist, had grown into one of the most prestigious composers in Europe.

Originally from Hamburg, Brahms made his life in Vienna. There he settled into a routine during the winter months of writing about musical matters, managing his affairs, and conducting the occasional concert. During the summer, he got out of town—that's when he wrote his music. He spent three summers in the Alpine village of Pörschach along Lake Worth.

In general, Brahms was a picture of modesty. In the summer of 1877, he rented a couple rooms in the housekeeper's quarters at Castle Leonstain, though he permitted himself one indulgence: he brought his own piano. As it happened, his Streicher grand couldn't fit through the hallway of his spartan accommodations, so he temporarily swapped with a local doctor and wrote the Second Symphony on a smaller instrument. Meanwhile, he swam in the turquoise waters of Wöthersee and ate the fresh catch of the day. After Brahms finished the symphony, he shared the score with his friend Theodore Billroth.

"It is all rippling streams, blue sky, sunshine, and cool green shadows," wrote Billroth. "How beautiful it must be at Pörschach."

As a joke, Brahms wrote to his publisher, "The new symphony is so melancholy that you can't stand it. I have never written anything so sad, so minorish: the score must appear with a black border."

The first performance took place in Vienna on December 30, 1877.

Today, the manor in Pörschach, now called the Hotel Schloss Leonstain, advertises the "Brahms Suite" furnished with antiques and framed music manuscripts.



Atlanta
Symphony
Orchestra



BRAHMS: Symphony No. 2

First ASO Performance: **APR 6, 1950** | **Henry Sopkin, conductor**

Most Recent ASO Performance: **APR 19–22, 2018** | **Matthias Pintscher, conductor**

Instrumentation: **2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, strings**