

Programme

Overture to *The Barber of Seville* Gioacchino Rossini
(1792-1868)

Creation of the World Darius Milhaud
(1892-1974)

INTERMISSION

Concerto No. 5 in A Major, K. 219 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
I. Allegro Aperto (1756-1791)

II. Adagio

III. Tempo di menuetto: Allegro

"Turkish March" from
The Triumph at Kars Modest Petrovich Mussourgsky
(1839-1881)

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

by JUD BARRY

Overture to *The Barber of Seville* Gioacchino Rossini
b. Pesaro, Italy, February 19, 1792
d. Passy, France, November 13, 1868

The overture for "Il barbiere di Siviglia." the antipasto that so perfectly sets the mood for the high feast of comic opera, is actually a regurgitation. In 1811 it first served to open Rossini's second opera, called "L'equivoco stravagante," the libretto of which was unequivocally and extravagantly bad. In 1813 Rossini dished it up with an opera about the Syrian campaign of the Roman emperor Aurelian, not an affair of much gaiety, and in 1815 with an un-merry opera about Elizabeth I of England's near-marriage to Leicester, the court favorite who did not bother to tell the great queen that he already had a wife.

Then, late in 1815, Rossini was signed by a theater in Rome to produce an opera based on a familiar story by Beaumarchais about a familiar fellow named Figaro, a common barber whose favorite pastime was clipping the pretensions of aristocrats. Faced with a performance date less than three months away, Rossini threw himself into his work, some of which involved extensive borrowings from previously unsuccessful operas. Saving the first for the last, the question of the overture was left, supposedly, until the day before the premiere. Then, with ruminant aplomb, Rossini produced the same overture for the Roman audience that he had used for those other operas in Bologna, Milan, and Naples. Finally, Rossini hit on the right dressing.

Gaetano Donizetti, Rossini's compatriot and contemporary, upon hearing of the staggering speed with which "Barber" had been composed, is said to have remarked, "Yes, yes, Rossini always was a lazy fellow."

Creation of the World Darius Milhaud
b. Aix-en-Provence, September 4, 1892
d. Geneva, June 22, 1974

When Darius Milhaud visited the United States in 1922, he already had a reputation in his native France as a member of "the Six," an informal grouping of young composers, proteges of Erik Satie, who sought an independent, eclectic way out of the confines of the Wagnerian system and the vapors of impressionism. Milhaud contributed to the artistic ferment by championing new music of all kinds, by setting to music a catalog of agricultural implements, by composing "furniture music" (this before radio and muzak made this idea a reality, to Milhaud's subsequent dismay), by incorporating exotic music into his compositions, and by deliberately composing in more than one key at the same time.

This last practice, called polytonality, was lambasted by such composers as Saint-Saens as a "bedlam aberration," but for Milhaud it was simply the best way of writing the music he had heard in his head since, as a child in Provence, he had listened to the interplay of croaks, bleats, chirps and cockcrows. Further, Milhaud regarded dissonance as the kind of sound that had the subtlest sweetness and most potent dynamism.