

**Sinfonia in D Major, Op. 11 No. 2**

Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint Georges (1745-1799)

Many composers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have fallen into obscurity, only to be rediscovered by later generations. For example, the music of Antonio Vivaldi is now ubiquitous, but he was virtually unknown to most music lovers until the 1920s. Joseph Bologne, once lost to history, is just now getting his time in the sun. Born in the French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, he was the son of a French plantation owner and a slave woman of Senegalese heritage. Educated in France, he became an expert swordsman and was appointed to the king's guard at the age of seventeen, gaining the title "Chevalier de Saint-Georges."

Little is known about Bologne's musical training. The first evidence of his violin virtuosity are concertos dedicated to him in 1764. In 1772 he was the soloist in two of his own violin concertos. According to one source, "The celebrated Saint-Georges... created a sensation in Paris; he was appreciated not as much for his compositions as for his performances, enrapturing especially the feminine members of his audience." His list of known compositions—most of them now lost—includes six operas, fourteen violin concertos, and eighteen string quartets.

The three-movement symphony heard on today's concert was also used as the overture to his opera *L'Amant anonyme* ("The Anonymous Lover"), his only surviving opera.

**Symphony No. 8 in B Minor, D. 759 "Unfinished"**

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Composers invariably leave unfinished works at their death. Beethoven left sketches indicating he was considering a tenth symphony when he died in 1827. Mahler died in 1911 leaving one completed movement for his tenth symphony and outlines for the remainder. Franz Schubert left many pieces undone at this death, but the "unfinishedness" of the Eighth Symphony is a more complicated story than its creator dying before completion.

There are few clear facts about the so-called "Unfinished" Symphony. Between February 1818 and November 1822 Schubert began three or four symphonies, but none of them got past the sketching stage. He did complete two movements of a symphony in B Minor. That manuscript, dated October 30, 1822, clearly written by Schubert and signed by him, contains the two movements. On the back of the last page of the second movement was the first page of a third movement scherzo. (In 1960 a few more pages of the scherzo were discovered.)

In April 1823, composer and critic Anslem Hüttenbrenner, a former classmate of Schubert, arranged for a music society in his native Graz, Austria to confer an honorary diploma on Schubert. Anslem's younger brother Josef delivered the diploma to Schubert that November, and in response the composer wrote a letter to the society: "...In order to give musical expression to my sincere gratitude, I shall take the liberty before long of presenting your honorable society with one of my symphonies in full score." Schubert gave Josef the manuscript of the unfinished B Minor symphony, presumably removing the pages with the incomplete scherzo. Did Schubert intend on completing the piece and sending the final two movements to the Graz society? Nothing in Schubert's other letters or manuscripts mention the B Minor at all; he never heard a performance of it. But three years later, he completed his last symphony, a four-movement work in C major now known as the "Great."

On his return to Graz, Josef gave the two-movement manuscript to his brother Anslem, who shoved it in a drawer. Thirty-two years after Schubert's death, Josef told Viennese conductor Johann von

Herbeck about the unfinished symphony in his brother's possession. Herbeck conducted the first performance, in Vienna on December 17, 1865, appending the last movement of Schubert's Third Symphony as a finale.

The first movement begins quietly, uncertainly, leading to lyrical melodies (one of them included in every "great themes of classical music" album). Schubert was a master of song, but large musical forms gave him trouble. Yet in this symphony the development, focusing on the first theme, is compact and direct. The second movement mood is mainly calm and peaceful with only occasional moments of unrest. Particularly notable is the introduction to the second theme, still and mysterious, played by the violins alone.

Schubert's "Unfinished" is a mystery that will likely never be solved. Why did he abandon it after two complete, well-structured movements? For some time, it was thought that the final two movements were just missing, or perhaps Schubert intended it to be a two-movement work; both opinions are now discredited. It has been conjectured that Schubert wanted—but couldn't figure out how—to incorporate the innovations in symphonic form being pioneered by Beethoven, particularly the inclusion of thematic interrelationships between movements, and shifting the emotional focus of a symphony from the first movement to the last. Yet, despite the many unanswered questions about its incompleteness, Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony has become one of the most performed and recorded pieces in the orchestral repertoire.

### **Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D Major, Op. 35** **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)**

*Completed in 1878. About the same time—1876: Wagner opens Bayreuth; Brahms completes First Symphony. 1877: First complete edition of Mozart's works begins publication; Edison invents the phonograph. 1878: Gilbert and Sullivan's "H.M.S. Pinafore" premieres.*

The writing of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto is bound with two pivotal incidents in his life—the beginning of his relationship with Nadezhda von Meck in December 1876, and his disastrous marriage to his former pupil Antonina Milyukova in July 1877. Mme. von Meck was an amateur pianist who admired Tchaikovsky's music. Shortly after her husband (a German engineer who, under her guidance, became a Russian railroad tycoon) died, she wrote to the composer, offering a monthly stipend on the condition that they never meet face-to-face.

Tchaikovsky's marriage to Antonina Milyukova was an arrangement he entered into with much misgiving. They settled in an apartment in Moscow, but within three weeks he left her, returning in early September only because he had to resume his teaching duties at the Moscow Conservatory. It was then that all the stress, strain, and angst of the whole episode came to a head for the emotionally fragile composer. He left Moscow for St. Petersburg and then traveled to Switzerland, a trip funded by von Meck. Accompanying Tchaikovsky was Yosif Kotek, one of his composition students and a gifted violinist. There is some evidence, in fact, that Kotek facilitated the entire patronage arrangement between Tchaikovsky and von Meck. Certainly, the student provided guidance to the composer on matters of violin technique, and while in Switzerland Tchaikovsky completed the Violin Concerto, along with the opera *Eugene Onegin*, and the Fourth Symphony.

Many pieces now considered "cornerstones of the repertoire" took some time to find their way to popularity, and Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto is certainly a prime example. Tchaikovsky intended the concerto for Leopold Auer, one of the leading virtuosos of the day, but the violinist called it unplayable due to the unprecedented technical challenges it presented. It wasn't until 1881 that Adolph Brodsky decided to premiere it in Vienna. Critical opinion was decidedly mixed; the

powerful critic Eduard Hanslick wrote one of his more caustic reviews, calling the concerto “long and pretentious...the violin wasn't played, it was pulled, torn, beaten black and blue.” (This review is perhaps the most cited example of how critics are often disproved by history.) But Brodsky persisted, and the concerto slowly became accepted as one of Tchaikovsky's greatest works; even Auer eventually recanted. Interestingly, a similar fate befell the 1875 First Piano Concerto, written for the great pianist Nicolai Rubenstein, who at first refused to perform it but later became its greatest champion.

The first movement is filled with typical Tchaikovsky melodies—flowing, singing tunes—that alternate with faster sections of considerable difficulty. The second movement *Canzonetta* has an air of nostalgia and gentle longing. The rondo-like third movement features fast, angular melodies with the flavor of Russian dance.