

TAMPA BAY TIMES MASTERWORKS

From Telemann to Mozart

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GEORG PHILIPP TELEMANN (1681-1767)**CONCERTO POLONOIS in G, TWV43****Duration: ca. 9 minutes**

Telemann was a busy guy. He cranked out some 3,000 works in his long career, including 1,000 church cantatas and an endless stream of orchestral suites, masses, operas and chamber music.

Despite this prolific output, Telemann's music has been criticized as artisan and superficial. He wrote quickly and in most any style demanded by his patrons – which he did with alacrity – but no single piece or group of works stand out as distinctive.

“Telemann's music survives to this day as evidence of a talented craftsman doing his job, often with grace and charm,” notes Jan Swafford in his *Vintage Guide to Classical Music*. Comparisons to his friend, Johann Sebastian Bach, reveal two diverse approaches to composing for the church – one prosaic and the other exalted – as seen in their individual views of the *St. Matthew Passion*, for example.

Unlike Bach, Telemann traveled widely across Europe, and by absorbing the styles and traditions of different cultures he became a truly cosmopolitan artist. During his time as a music director in Sorau, Poland, Telemann got an earful of local tunes, and was enthralled by what he called the music's “barbaric beauty.” He described a band of bagpipes and fiddles as “wonderfully inspiring” and providing him with “enough ideas to last a lifetime.”

From these experiences came the Concerto Polonois (Polish) for strings, a short work that opens with a slow section similar to the French overture and follows with early forms of the polonaise and mazurka that would later be mastered by Chopin. In this work, Telemann said he wasn't imitating the music of Poland so much as acknowledging his debt to its musicians by writing in a “style which I have robed in Italian dress.”

GEORG PHILIPP TELEMANN (1681-1767)**OVERTURE BURLESQUE, TWV55****Duration: ca. 14 minutes**

The overture of today is a different animal than it was in Telemann's day. Rather than a single-movement piece for symphony orchestra, the Baroque overture was a suite of dances, often with colorful names to describe a program or story.

Telemann excelled at the overture – more than 135 exist – most in the languid French style and published under the designation TWV (“Telemann Werke Verzeichnis” or “Telemann Works Catalog”). Irwin Hoffman, TFO's late music director, took pride in owning an original Telemann manuscript, which he kept in a glass case in his St. Petersburg home.

The 14-minute *Overture Burlesque* depicts the characters in a commedia dell'arte, an early form of professional theater. The slow opening section sets an evocative tone with dotted rhythms, followed by a lively patch of fiddles, then five character sketches: Scaramouches, Harlequinade, Columbine, Pierrot and Mezzetino. The final section is an example of the exotic "Turkish" style that was fashionable in Germany at the time.

ANDRE GRÉTRY (1741-1813)

SUITE FROM ZÉMIRE ET AZOR (BEAUTY & THE BEAST)

Duration: ca. 14 minutes

Many of you have enjoyed the Broadway musical and Disney film *Beauty and the Beast*, but may not know it was big hit on the opera circuit more than 250 years ago. The name Andre Grétry probably doesn't ring a bell either, as his music is rarely performed today.

Jeannette Sorrell, guest conductor for this weekend's Masterworks program, thought Grétry could use a little nudge, especially after she performed the full opera for delighted listeners not long ago.

"I first encountered *Zémire et Azor* when I was asked to conduct it at the Opera Theatre St. Louis," she said. "After the audiences applaud enthusiastically for this now-obscure opera every night, I decided to create a concert suite so that the music can reach wider audiences. I hope the Florida audiences will enjoy it as much as St Louis did."

Grétry, who was the personal music director for Maria Antoinette before she lost her head, based his opera on Beaumont's fairy tale *Beauty and the Beast* of 1750, and was first performed a year later. It was a phenomenal success throughout Europe, and a copy of the score was found in Mozart's home after his death. Grétry's inherent gift for melody brought his characters to life, a trait he must have admired in his famous contemporary.

"Grétry's music sounds like early Mozart with a French accent," Sorrell said. "His colorful use of the orchestra gives his music that special French sparkle – including an overture that evokes a turbulent tempest and shipwreck."

Sorrell explains her four short revised sections that follow: "*An Entr'acte* depicting the character of Zémire; the *Flight of the Clouds* where she travels on a magic cloud; a rustic *Tambourin* evoking a festive parade in Provence; and the *March of the Egyptians*, which rings with an 18th-century Frenchman's delightfully naive idea of Egyptian music."

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)

SYMPHONY NO. 33 IN B FLAT MAJOR, K. 319

Duration: ca. 20 minutes

If art reflects life, Mozart had a strange way of connecting them. On a visit to Paris in the summer of 1778 with his mother, Anna Maria, the unexpected happened: She fell ill and died. After several months of wearisome job hunting, the young man returned under a dark cloud to his Salzburg home.

Mozart wrote two symphonies over the following year, and the second – in B flat major – reflects none of the gloom one could imagine from a grieving son. Essentially a chamber symphony scored for oboes, horns, bassoons and strings, the music is ingratiating, full of wit and spontaneity.

In its original guise, Mozart cast the symphony in the Italian style of three movements – fast, slow, fast – and the first two are unusual by including “new” material that normally would not be found in the development sections. The Mozart scholar Alfred Einstein noted “a new intimacy of feeling” in the andante and a “personal power of imagination” in the boisterous finale. Here, Mozart introduces a four-note moto again heard in his *Jupiter* symphony, and as well as in later works by Felix Mendelssohn and Karl Goldmark.

Then, in 1782, Mozart decided to expand the work by including a new third movement – a concise, 32-measure minuet – to please Viennese audiences who regarded this dance-like section as *de rigueur* in any respectable symphony. But it did more than appeal to local tastes: The symphony as an art form had evolved in size and scope and demanded more structure to balance the sheer weight of new ideas. Of course, the refinements of Mozart would soon be expanded by Beethoven – who turned the symphony on its head.

Program notes by Kurt Loft, former music critic for the Tampa Tribune.