

Mozart, Mendelssohn & Massey

Sunday, October 27 – 2 pm

William Eddins, conductor

Danae Dörken, piano

Julianne Scott & Robert Spady, clarinets

Sunday Prelude, 1:15 pm Upper Circle (Third Level) Lobby with D.T. Baker

Sunday Encore, post performance Main Lobby with Danae Dörken, Julianne Scott, Robert Spady & Michael Massey

MENDELSSOHN

Concert Piece for Two Clarinets in F minor, Op.113

(8')*

MOZART

Symphony No. 29 in A Major, K.201/186a

(29')*

Allegro moderato

Andante

Menuetto

Allegro con spirito

INTERMISSION (20 minutes)

MASSEY

Symphonic Poem No. 2 – Two Rivers

(17')*

Nomeew (Sturgeon): Prelude – Dance - Lament

Kisiskaciwani (Saskatchewan)

MENDELSSOHN

Piano Concerto No. 2 in D minor, Op.40

(24')*

Allegro appassionato

Adagio: Molto sostenuto

Finale: Presto scherzando

program subject to change

*indicates approximate performance duration

Concert Piece for Two Clarinets in F minor, Op.113

Felix Mendelssohn

(b. Hamburg, 1809 / d. Leipzig, 1847)

First performed: January 1, 1833

This is the ESO premiere of the piece

While we certainly have the magnificent artistry of clarinetist Heinrich Baermann to thank for this little gem by Mendelssohn, we also have his talents as a cook to thank as well. “He is one of the best musicians I know,” declared Mendelssohn – and he knew many of the best over his career, so that’s saying something. The two men became good friends, and when Mendelssohn learned that Baermann’s son, Carl, was a virtuoso basset horn player, he proposed an exchange. The Baermann’s would cook two specialty meals for Mendelssohn, and he would respond with two works to showcase the talents of father and son.

This afternoon’s work was originally written for clarinet and its lower-voiced cousin, the basset horn, in 1833, when the Baermann’s visited the composer in Berlin. Mendelssohn even entitled the original manuscript “The Battle near Prague! Grand Duet for Sweet Dumpling and Cheese Strudel or Clarinet and Basset Horn.” Though less than eight minutes long, the piece is in three distinct sections – a tiny concerto, almost. It opens with a dramatic dialog for the two solo instruments, which quickly becomes a more amiable and friendly exchange. The middle section, Andante, is set to a measured pace in the strings, with the soloists presenting a charming duet. The strings again set the pace for the final section, a whirling and bracing Allegro molto full of virtuoso passages for both solo instruments – an “anything you can do,” playful finish.

Symphony No. 29 in A Major, K.201/186a

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

(b. Salzburg, 1756 / d. Vienna, 1791)

Completed: April 6, 1774

Last ESO performance: June 2005

The *Symphony No. 29*, and the *G minor Symphony No. 25*, are singled out among Mozart’s symphonies as being “turning points,” works which ushered in a new era of composition for Mozart. This came about not only because of Mozart’s development as a composer, but also because of the new way the symphony as a form was being treated in the world of music.

Many Mozart symphonies to this point had been used rather interchangeably with opera overtures – in fact very few overtures Mozart wrote for his operas had not been adapted into symphonic form. But

with the *25th* and *29th Symphonies*, Mozart took his first great steps into creating works which stood alone, and could in fact be key elements of orchestral concerts.

The *29th Symphony* begins quietly, and the opening material is based on a quirky octave drop, with scurrying violin passages syncopated by the other instruments. Some contrasting elements in the development section do not alter the mood – rather, different keys and dynamics are explored. The slow movement is one of quiet dignity, though there is a compelling rhythmic pull to it as well. It suggests a noble, muted ceremony more than anything else.

The minuet of the third movement has, in common with the opening movement, a sense of playfulness to it, with dotted rhythms and strong dynamic contrasts. The gentle roll of the finale is very much in the style of “la chasse,” or a hunt on horseback. Pulses from the horns add to that sense, while the quivering strings make merry sport of the pursuit.

Symphonic Poem No. 2 – Two Rivers

Michael Massey

(b. London, England, 1945)

Program note by the composer:

After a lifetime of performing, conducting, and teaching, I decided when I turned 70 that I would like to try my hand at composition, which is perhaps the synthesis of these activities. So far I have found the endeavour very challenging but also very compelling and rewarding, and I am hooked.

We often take for granted the places that we encounter in our daily lives and perhaps do not realize the history or significance of said places. Living in St. Albert and working in Edmonton means that I cross the Sturgeon and North Saskatchewan Rivers almost every day. I thought I would try to evoke some of the history and social context of these two rivers in this composition. The first section, *Namew*, with the quoting of the Red River Jig, has a more direct implication, whereas the second section, *Kisiskaciwani*, is more universal and could refer to any river which passes through a metropolis.

The following poetic outline conveys some of the ideas I try to capture without being too specific. I want the music to speak for itself.

IDEAS

A small river - slowly moving

winding through the prairie

passes through Cree and Métis land

Red River Jig - called the Métis national anthem

residential schools - an attempt to destroy a culture

lament for a river which seems to be dying and a culture which can never die.

A large river - starts as a trickle from a glacier

winds quickly through the prairie

passes through a great city

hears the hustle and bustle - but just observes

becomes the heart of that city

continues on to join the infinite ocean

a metaphor for life.

Piano Concerto No. 2 in D minor, Op.40

Mendelssohn

(see above)

First performed: September 21, 1837 in Birmingham, England

Last ESO performance: April 1995

Mendelssohn wrote many works for solo instrument and orchestra throughout his life, but among his “piano concertos” are several youthful works never published during his lifetime. However, they certainly gave him enough experience writing music in this way so that by the time he wrote the two official piano concertos in his catalog, he knew what he was doing, so to speak.

And yet, while his first concerto was dashed off in a fit of youthful enthusiasm in 1830-31, and is full of exuberance and vitality, his second had a much more difficult gestation. That may explain why the first is performed much more often – it is instantly the more likable and endearing. Despite the struggles Mendelssohn went through bringing the *D minor Concerto* to fruition, however, it is unjustifiably kept in the shadow of the showier earlier one.

In 1837, the 28-year-old composer was in England. For that trip, he wrote the *Concerto No. 2*, playing the solo part himself at the work’s premiere. Nevertheless, the concerto was only wrested from him

with great effort – he agonized over it more so than many of his other works. In fact, he was unsure of his own feelings about the work to such an extent, that he delayed any thought of publishing the work until months after its Birmingham premiere. The astute Robert Schumann, a friend of Mendelssohn's and an important reviewer of the day, noted, "This concerto, to be sure, will offer virtuosos little in which to show off their monstrous dexterity. Mendelssohn gives them almost nothing to do that they have not already done a hundred times before." But it is not that the work is not substantial or deeply satisfying – it is simply not the instant crowd-pleaser that the First surely is.

There is a strong similarity in the template used in both the *G minor* and *D minor Concertos*. Both dispense with extended orchestral introductions, bringing the piano in quickly, and having the soloist take on the dominant role in the thematic exposition. As ever with Mendelssohn, he barely pauses between movements – he greatly disliked the applause between movements so common in his day. Like the first, the Second Concerto's development section is based on the first main theme, and it is the piano which ushers in the slow movement. In the case of the Second Concerto, there is the influence of the slow movement of Beethoven's "*Emperor*" Concerto here – as heartfelt and directly affecting as anything Mendelssohn wrote.

The finale begins straight out of the second movement, and is in G minor – an effective transition as it leads into the main body of the final movement in the tonic major, D Major. This movement is the most sunlit of the concerto, and if it is not the splashy virtuoso finale that the *First Concerto* offers, it is more profound, and no less brilliant.

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