



**SAN DIEGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
A JACOBS MASTERWORKS CONCERT**

February 27 and 28, 2015  
March 1, 2015

**ELLEN TAAFFE ZWILICH**

*Upbeat!*

**WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART**

**Piano Concerto No. 25 in C Major, K. 503**

Allegro maestoso

Andante

Allegretto

**Richard Goode, piano**

INTERMISSION

**FRANZ SCHUBERT**

**Symphony in C Major, D. 944:**

*The Great C Major*

Andante – Allegro; Allegro ma non troppo

Andante con moto

Scherzo: Allegro vivace

Allegro vivace

## **PROGRAM NOTES**

### ***Upbeat!***

ELLEN TAAFFE ZWILICH

Born April 30, 1939, Miami

Ellen Taaffe Zwilich was the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for Music – in 1983 for her Symphony No. 1 – and over the last four decades she has become one of this country’s most successful and prolific composers. Her catalog of works lists five symphonies, numerous concerti (including many for unusual or unexpected combinations of instruments), orchestral works, chamber music and vocal music. Trained as a violinist, Zwilich played for several years in the American Symphony Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski before deciding to devote herself full-time to composition. She studied with Elliott Carter and Roger Sessions and was the first woman to earn a Doctorate of Musical Arts from Juilliard. For some years Zwilich served as the Francis Eppes Distinguished Professor of Music at Florida State University.

Zwilich composed *Upbeat!* in 1998 on a commission from the Susan W. Rose Foundation and the Richard Herman Foundation, and it was first performed on September 5, 1999, on the Great Lawn of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. The National Symphony was led on that occasion by Anthony Aibel, to whom Zwilich dedicated the score. As its title suggests, *Upbeat!* was composed as a curtain-raiser, a brief opening work intended to fire an audience up and get them in a, well, upbeat mood, and over its four-minute span *Upbeat!* does just that. Zwilich made a shrewd choice as she set out to compose this music: she took one of the greatest opening movements in the history of music, the *Praeludium* from Bach’s Partita in E Major for Unaccompanied Violin, and used it as the structuring device for her own prelude. Bach’s wonderful *Praeludium* – virtually a non-stop rush of buoyant sixteenth-notes – is here fused with Zwilich’s imagination and rhythmic sense, and the result has been described by one observer as “Bach meets Copland.”

### **Piano Concerto No. 25 in C Major, K. 503**

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Born January 27, 1756, Salzburg

Died December 5, 1791, Vienna

In the fall of 1786, the 30-year-old Mozart set to work simultaneously on two large-scale

orchestral works: he completed the Piano Concerto in C Major on December 4 and a Symphony in D Major two days later; the symphony would assume the nickname *Prague* when it was premiered in that city the following month. There is, however, no record of the premiere of the concerto, nor is there any indication of the occasion for which it was written; this remains the least-known of the series of phenomenal piano concertos Mozart wrote in the years 1785-86. It lacks the seething power of the Concerto in D minor, K. 466, the jaunty heroism of the Concerto in C Major, K. 467, the lyricism of the Concerto in A Major, K. 488, and the dark drama of the Concerto in C minor, K. 491. Some have found it almost faceless in that distinguished company; *The New Grove Dictionary*, in fact, calls this concerto “almost neutral in character.”

These critics seem to have a point. The Concerto in C Major is not memorably lyric: its themes – built on triadic chords, scales and simple rhythmic motifs – feel almost static. But the wonder of this music is what Mozart does with his material, for this concerto shows him at his finest; its graceful interplay between soloist and orchestra, ingenious development of (seemingly) neutral ideas and contrapuntal ease make the Concerto in C Major one of his most subtle and affecting scores.

The opening *Allegro maestoso* is aptly named: this truly is majestic music, and it leaps to life with one of Mozart’s grandest openings, punctuated by the sound of trumpets and drums. Yet this massive opening is built simply on C Major chords, almost static in themselves, and only incidentally does Mozart introduce the rhythmic motif that will shape and unify so much of this music. (This pattern of three eighth notes and a downbeat would later become famous as the opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, but it haunted Mozart as well.) A further surprise is the entrance of the piano: after the mighty orchestral opening – with its powerful chords, rushing scales and C minor modulations – the piano makes what seems an understated entrance, slipping in almost shyly. It has been noted that this movement manages to be heroic while avoiding any trace of struggle. There are no battles fought and won here, but there is instead an air of serenity, a carefree exultation in sophisticated music-making as Mozart transforms simple materials into music of charm and grace over an unusually long span. (This is the longest movement in any Mozart concerto.)

The subsequent movements partake of the same spirit and technique, though on a smaller scale. The *Andante*, relaxed and reflective, features some of Mozart’s sensitive writing for

woodwinds. The piano part, gentle as it is, is marked by some unusually wide interval skips, particularly the upward leap of a tenth. Along the way, alert listeners will recognize the same rhythmic motif that underlay the first movement. The finale is rondo-like in structure, but with some important variations. Mozart borrowed its central theme from the ballet music to his opera *Idomeneo*, composed six years earlier, though here that tune makes few literal returns. Rather, it is subtly varied in a movement that seems more a series of continuous variations than the standard rondo process of literal repetition. In this movement Mozart combines some of the reflective quality of the *Andante* with the C Major trumpet-and-drum fanfares of the opening movement.

Some scholars have gone so far as to suggest that Mozart deliberately made the thematic material of this concerto neutral as a way of shifting interest away from the themes and onto what he does with them; this may explain the unusual length of the development in the first movement. In any case, while the Concerto in C Major may not have achieved the popularity of some of Mozart's other piano concertos, it remains – in its subtle and expressive way – one of his finest creations.

### **Symphony in C Major, D. 944: *The Great C Major***

FRANZ SCHUBERT

Born January 31, 1797, Vienna

Died November 19, 1828, Vienna

Schubert's final year has become the stuff of legend. Before he died in November 1828 at age 31, he composed a series of extraordinary masterpieces, including the Mass in E-flat Major, three final piano sonatas, the songs of the *Schwanengesang* cycle and the Cello Quintet. Towering above all these is his *Great C Major* Symphony, whose manuscript is dated March 1828. And, as the legend has it, Schubert never heard a note of any of these works: the manuscripts were consigned to dusty shelves upon his death, and it was years before the music was performed, much longer before it was understood. Not until 11 years after Schubert's death did Robert Schumann discover the manuscript of the symphony in Vienna and send it off to Leipzig, where Felix Mendelssohn led the premiere on March 21, 1839. That dramatic beginning established it as one of the masterpieces of the symphonic literature.

This has always made a terrific story, even though most of it is untrue. Recent research

(which includes dating the manuscript paper that Schubert used in different years) has shown that he actually composed this symphony during the summer of 1825. He had recently recovered from a serious illness, and now he went on a walking tour of Upper Austria with his friend, the baritone Michael Vogl. In the town of Gmunden, mid-way between Salzburg and Linz, Schubert began to sketch a symphony. He worked on it all that summer and over the next two years. (The date “March 1828” on the manuscript may be the date of final revisions.) And Schubert *did* hear at least some of this music. Orchestral parts were copied, and the orchestra of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde played through it in the composer’s presence before rejecting it as too difficult. Far from being welcomed into the repertory following Mendelssohn’s premiere, the symphony actually made its way very slowly. Attempts to perform it in London and Paris in the 1840s foundered when players jeered the music and refused to continue because of its difficulty; the American premiere had occurred (in 1851) before this symphony was heard in those two cities.

Schubert scores the symphony for classical orchestra (pairs of winds, plus timpani and strings), but he makes one addition that transforms everything: to Mozart’s orchestra he adds three trombones, which are given important roles thematically. (It is part of the originality of this symphony that Schubert is willing, for the first time, to treat the trombone as a thematic – rather than supportive – instrument.) Their tonal heft dictates a greatly increased string section and occasional doubling of the woodwind parts, and everything about this music – its sonority and range of expression – suggests that Schubert envisioned its performance by a large orchestra.

Very early this symphony acquired the nickname *Great*, a description that needs to be understood carefully. It was originally called *The Great C Major* to distinguish it from Schubert’s brief Symphony No. 6 in C Major, inevitably called *The Little C Major*. And so in its original sense, *Great* was an indication only of relative size. But that description has stuck to this music, and if ever a symphony deserved to be called *Great*, this is it.

It has a magic beginning. In unison, two horns sound a long call that seems to come from a great distance. In the classical symphony, the slow introduction usually had nothing to do thematically with the sonata-form first movement that followed but served only to call matters to order and prepare the way for the *Allegro*. It is one more mark of Schubert’s new vision that this slow introduction will have important functions in the main body of the movement. Schubert repeats this opening melody in various guises before the music rushes into the *Allegro; ma non*

*tropo*, where strings surge ahead on sturdy dotted rhythms while woodwinds respond with chattering triplets – Schubert will fully exploit the energizing contrast between these two rhythms. The second subject, a lilting tune for woodwinds, arrives in the “wrong” key of E minor. (Schubert deftly nudges it into the “correct” key of G Major.) All seems set for a proper exposition, when Schubert springs one of his best surprises: very softly, trombones intone the horn theme from the very beginning, their dark color giving that noble tune an ominous power. That theme now begins to penetrate this movement, and the rhythm of its second measure will take on a thematic importance of its own. The development is brief, but the recapitulation is full, and Schubert drives the movement to a thrilling conclusion; trombones push the music forward powerfully, and the opening horn call is shouted out in all its glory as the movement hammers to its close.

The slow movement is marked *Andante con moto*, and the walking tempo implied in that title makes itself felt in the music’s steady tread. Solo oboe sings the sprightly main theme, while the peaceful second subject arrives in the strings. There is no development, but Schubert creates another moment of pure magic: over softly-pulsing string chords, a solo horn (once again sounding as if from far away) leads the way into the recapitulation. Schumann’s description of this passage, often quoted, is worth hearing again: “Here everyone is hushed and listening, as though some heavenly visitant were quietly stealing through the orchestra.” The recapitulation itself is not literal, and Schubert drives to a great climax where the music is suddenly ripped into a moment of silence, the only point in the entire movement where the steady opening tread is not heard. Only gradually does the orchestra recover as the cellos lead to a luminous restatement of the second subject, now richly embellished.

The *Allegro vivace* is the expected scherzo and trio, but again Schubert surprises us: the movement is in sonata form and develops over such a generous span that if all repeats are taken, it can approach the length of the two opening movements. Strings stamp out the powerful opening, and violins soar and plunge as it begins to develop. Part of the pleasure here lies in the way Schubert transforms the sledgehammer power of the opening into a series of terraced, needle-sharp entrances in the course of the development. By contrast, the trio sings with a rollicking charm before horns lead the way back to a literal reprise of the scherzo.

The finale, also marked *Allegro vivace*, opens with a salvo of bright fanfares. So quickly

do these whip past that one does not at first recognize that they make the same contrast between dotted and triplet rhythms that powered the first movement – now these return to drive the finale along a shaft of white-hot energy. This is the movement that caused early orchestras to balk, and it remains very difficult, particularly for the strings. It is in sonata form with two subjects, the first growing smoothly out of the flying triplets and a second that rides along the energy of four pounding chords. The first theme provides the speed – those showers of triplets almost seem to throw sparks through the hall – while the second subject and its pounding chords take on a menacing strength as Schubert builds to the climax. Along the way, attentive listeners will hear a whiff of the finale of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, and Schubert’s own close is as powerful as those of the master he so much admired.

**-Program notes by Eric Bromberger**

### **WHY THIS PROGRAM?**

When I interviewed Jahja Ling regarding his particular thoughts and feelings about this concert, he noted that he had conducted many other Zwilich compositions. “I gave the world premiere of her Third Symphony with the New York Philharmonic. She is a very prolific composer of very good music...”

Regarding the Mozart Piano Concerto No. 25, he commented, “This is one of his biggest and, certainly, greatest concerti – noble, joyous and exuberant.” Our music director was especially pleased to have it played here by Richard Goode, whom he described as “one of the foremost pianists of our time. There is simply something so special when he plays anything in the Classical repertory, a certain finesse, sensitivity and a true understanding of the poetic style.”

“In his Ninth Symphony, Schubert is at his grandest, as well as his most big-hearted.” Continuing, Jahja Ling noted that it is, in a large sense, “about movement and rhythm, but the sense of movement is always so very attuned to the composer's enormous musical and melodic sense...”

### **PERFORMANCE HISTORY**

Jahja Ling led the San Diego Symphony Orchestra when Schubert’s *The Great C Major* Symphony was last played here, during the 2005-06 season. That was the ninth presentation by

this orchestra since Earl Bernard Murray conducted its first performance here in the 1962-63 season. Stephen Bishop-Kovacevich was the soloist in the only previous performance of the Mozart Piano Concerto No. 25 during the 1987-88 season, when Bernhard Klee was the guest conductor. These performances of Ellen Zwilich's *Upbeat!* are its debut with the Orchestra.