

Mozart - Symphony No.41 & Symphony No.39 (Schmidt-Isserstedt) [1978]

Written by bluesever

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Mozart: Symphony No. 41 In C Major (Jupiter"), K. 551 A1 *First Movement: Allegro vivace* 8:04 A2 *Second Movement: Andante Cantabile* 8:25 A3 *Third Movement: Menuetto: Allegretto* 4:54 A4 *Fourth Movement: Molto Allegro* 6:03

Mozart: Symphony No. 39 In E Flat Major, K. 543

B1 *First Movement: Adagio - Allegro* 8:36 B2 *Second Movement: Andante Con Moto* 8:43 B3 *Third Movement: Menuetto: Allegretto* 4:01 B4 *Fourth Movement: Allegro* 5:40

The London Symphony Orchestra Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt - conductor

This lp (only, alas) boasted striking sound and one performance to match it. The LSO possessed sufficient weight and balanced orchestra-choirs-good brass, winds and tympani. Winds in the second movement of 39 and the trio of iii are especially euphonious. Tempi in #39 sound perfect and bloat is absent. I was equally impressive in a few other LSO recordings: Schubert #6 for Mercury and the Mozart concerti #s 6 and 20 with Ashkenazy/Decca-VA's best versions of both. The Jupiter is well played but could use more heat and power. I would love both to be endisced.

Peers : #39- Jochum/BRSO/DG (my favorite) and Bamberg/Orfeo; Szell/Sony; Dohnanyi/Cleveland/Decca; Klemperer/PO/Testament only; Tate/ECO/EMI; Sawallisch/Czech/PO; Kubelik/BRSO/Sony; Davis/Dresden/Philips

: #41-Jochum/BRSO live/Golden Melodram;Klemperer/PO/Testament; Dohnanyi/Decca; Bohm/RCOA/Philips only; Horenstein/Vox; Steinberg/EMI -poor sound; Jochum/BSO/DG (however, the Jochum/BSO/Golden Melodram I still value most --- Jon Miller, amazon.com

The near-quarter century that separates Mozart's first symphony and his last -- the Symphony No. 41 in C major (1788) -- was marked by the composer's recurrent, if not ongoing, interest in the possibilities inherent in this form. Upon examination of the chronology of Mozart's works, one finds that the composition of his symphonies tends to occur in irregularly spaced groups, of as many as nine or ten examples in a row, rather than regularly or singly. What this might suggest, aside from any financially based motivation, is that he employed these various periods specifically for the working out of the problems and challenges of the symphonic form. In surveying these works, one finds that the prominent benchmarks increase almost geometrically as time progresses, so that by the production of the "Jupiter" Symphony two years before his death -- as part of a group of three composed within the space of less than three months -- the full extent of the evolution which has taken place is striking indeed.

The Symphony No. 41 aptly embodies what is now identified as a paradigm of Classical symphonic form: four movements, the first and last in a quick tempo, the second slower, the third a minuet with trio. Unencumbered by norms suggested by any model, however, Mozart's deft imagination distinguishes this work from others in a similar cast. The first movement is characterized in part by the dramatic and effective employment of unexpected pauses in the rhythmic flow through the use of rests, a trait shared with and perhaps influenced by the symphonies of Haydn. After an initial regularity, irregular and changing phrase lengths contribute as well to the dramatic impetus. The serene F major quietude of the second movement's opening is soon disrupted, posed against more restless, rhythmically insistent minor-key episodes. This calm/dark conflict continues throughout, the initial spirit eventually prevailing. The falling chromatic theme and flowing, even accompaniment of the Minuet set a graceful tone for the third movement. The companion Trio provides an earthier, more overtly dancelike mood, which is, however, interrupted by a suddenly more serious tutti outburst. The final movement is exceptional for the richness of its contrapuntal language, a somewhat unexpected -- and, some of Mozart's contemporaries would venture, unfashionable -- attribute in a symphonic work of the time. The four-note motive that begins the movement is put through its paces in a number of guises, most prominently as the beginning of a recurrent canon and fugue subject which occurs both as originally presented and in inversion. The effect is one not of academicism but of great tension and dramatic impulse which, borne bristling and in search of resolution, finds its resting place only in the final bars. --- Michael Rodman, Rovi

No group of Mozart's works has been the subject of more discussion than his final three

symphonies, Nos. 39 in E flat, No. 40 in G minor, and the "Jupiter," No. 41, in C. They were apparently composed within the remarkably short space of about two months during the summer of 1788, and the composer's motivation for writing them has since been vigorously debated. In common with his contemporaries, Mozart composed nearly exclusively for practical purposes, yet none has been positively identified in this instance. Still, the least plausible explanation advanced is that Mozart composed his great final symphonic trilogy as a result of some personal "inner need," the attractive romanticism of the theory being compounded by the assertion that he did not live to hear these three pinnacles of the symphonic repertoire performed. Such a theory runs counter to all we know about Mozart's working practices. In particular, he would not have had the time for such indulgence during the period concerned, a summer during which his surviving correspondence is predominantly concerned with increasingly desperate begging letters to his benefactor and fellow Freemason Michael Puchberg. More practically, it has been suggested that Mozart intended to mount a series of subscription concerts for the fall or Advent season. It was thought that these concerts never took place, but recently the scholar H.C. Robbins Landon has persuasively argued that these concerts were in fact held, with the three last symphonies as the principal new works performed at them. It also appears highly likely that Mozart took the new works on the tour of Germany he undertook the following year.

In the three symphonies of 1788 (to which must be added in this regard the "Prague" Symphony of 1786) we find the culmination of Mozart's assimilation of the contrapuntal style of Bach and Handel he had first begun to study during the early 1780s. It was this synthesis of "learned" style with the clean clarity of classicism that caused so much trouble for Mozart's contemporaries, to whom his late style became increasingly "difficult." Each of the symphonies occupies a very specific world of its own. The E flat Symphony, entered by Mozart into his thematic catalog on June 26, 1786, is often characterized as being "warm and autumnal" (Robbins Landon), a description that (as so often with Mozart) tells only part of the story; it fails to bring to attention the symphony's tensile strength and a dramatic quality that does not preclude moments of pathos more readily associated with the G minor symphony. There are four movements. The opening Allegro is prefaced (as it had been in both the "Prague" and "Linz" symphonies, its immediate numerical predecessors) by a powerful slow Adagio introduction. The following Andante has a secondary theme which is much stormier (and also subjected to considerable development) than might be expected in a "slow" movement, while the succeeding Minuet has an elegant gait set off by a rustic central trio. The final Allegro is a dazzling display of good humor and contrapuntal wizardry, its complexity skillfully masked in one of those movements in which the composer conceals his art. The symphony is scored for flute, pairs of clarinets, bassoons, horns, trumpets, timpani, and strings. --- Brian Robins, Rovi

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