

TOMPKINS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Encore Performance

Jesse H. Jones Hall for the
Performing Arts



May 1 • 6:55 PM
Houston, Texas

Programme

La Forza del Destino (1862).....Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

Symphony No. 34 in C Major (1780).....Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

I. Allegro Vivace

Symphony No. 2 (1902).....Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

IV. Finale



Program Notes

La Forza del Destino (1862)

In the 19th century, the musical world was characterized by a craze for operas with many composers taking a shot at composing operas in the hopes of gaining money and fame. Despite the large influx of opera composers, one prominent figure continued to dominate the field: Giuseppe Verdi. By the 1860s, Verdi had procured fame and respect, overtaking the world of Italian opera and even gaining rapid influence over opera houses all over Europe. With his notoriety and fame, Verdi was commissioned by The Imperial Theatre of Saint Petersburg, creating *La forza del destino*. The libretto of the opera was inspired by a Spanish drama called *Don Alvaro o la fuerza del sino* from 1835, imbued with dramatic and mystifying plots.

The storyline of the opera follows the tragedy of three main characters – Two star-crossed lovers, Don Alvaro and Leonora, as well as Don Carlos, Leonora's vengeful brother. While the audience had been expecting a more light-hearted and even humorous opera, the story immediately shuts down any hope for this with dark themes and plot points being introduced as early as Act I. The play opens at night with Leonora, daughter of the Marquis of Calatrava, informing her maid about her soon-to-come secret elopement with her lover, Don Alvaro. The two are stopped by Leonora's father who furiously challenges Alvaro to a duel, leading Alvaro to kill him by sheer accident. The two flee in a panic, splitting from one another. In Act II, Leonora finds out that her brother, Don Carlos, is out to kill Alvaro out of revenge, leading Leonora to hide away at a church. On the flip side, Act III takes place on a battlefield where the audience learns that Alvaro, believing Leonora to be dead, has joined the army and is now friends with Carlos. The two men, not knowing each other's identities, fight together until a battle wound leads Carlos to find out that Alvaro is his father's killer. Act IV begins with Alvaro at a church, repenting and begging for peace between him and Carlos. With this, we also see Leonora again, who, even after 5 years of not seeing him, still loves Alvaro. Carlos forces Alvaro into a duel, with Alvaro coming out on top and Carlos being mortally wounded. These last moments of the opera entail tragedy as, with the little life he had left, Carlos stabs Leonora, killing her and leaving Alvaro behind to lament the blood on his hands and grieve his lover's death. Guilt-ridden and left without Leonora, Alvaro takes his own life, ending the opera.

Due to the premier's lack of success, Verdi, frustrated with the end product, revised the score, thus resulting in the creation of a new version, Overture to *La forza del destino*. The piece, directly translating to "The Force of Destiny" is dark and dramatic, fitting for the plot it was originally meant to follow, as even in the seemingly peaceful and serene parts, a lingering feeling of gloom looms over. It pulls themes from the original opera, outlining the tragic course of the lovers and their inescapable destiny. The overture opens with three unified Es from the brass section, casting a forlorn darkness upon the audience. This is followed by a restless and agitated theme led by the lower strings conducted in 3/8, a dark omen that highlights the treacherous life of the two lovers. This dreary and depressing theme works to haunt the piece throughout, whether it be fully blared as the main melody or hidden in the background – it foreshadows the ill fate of the two lovers and the inevitable tragedy that is soon to come. The piece continues on with a melancholic tune played by the winds section, accompanied by the ominous repetitive theme played by the upper strings. This theme comes from Leonora's Aria in Act II, *Il Trovatore*. It then transitions to a seemingly serene nature that is, once again, haunted by the dreary theme, now passed off to the bassoons and lower strings. The intensity builds with these two distinct tunes growing louder and louder, sounding as if the serene theme is now competing to be heard over the dark melody. The foreboding theme ultimately takes over the piece with a new intense and surging part of the composition, a dramatic climax that plays before the final lethal duel between Alvaro and Carlos. This pattern is seen to repeat throughout the overture; a supposedly jovial and light-natured theme is introduced yet is slowly but surely plagued with a comfortless and gloomy theme, building in grand intensity before falling and repeating the cycle once again. Eventually, the composition reaches its final section, a fast-paced, stressful section roaring with the booming sound of builds and drops. The piece, now marked with a *piu animato*, dashes through vigorous themes, being played faster than ever. The overture finally concludes with a grand, unified ending, bringing the intensity and chaos to a close.

Mozart Symphony No. 34 in C (1780)

I. Allegro vivace

In 1780, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was widely received as one of the greatest musical prodigies, composing symphonies and operas that captivated audiences with high-spirited melodies, sorrowful hymns, heroic fanfares, et cetera. Despite this, the concurrently 24-year-old composer and musician faced stagnation in his career as the official court musician for the city of Salzburg, Austria. In a state of frustration, Mozart composed Symphony No. 34 – a playful and satirical symphony that ironically is considered to be one of his most exuberant and charming works.

The first movement, Allegro Vivace, begins with a bold statement of the theme in C major as a satirical jab at the cliché key considered “grand” and “ceremonious” by the rulers of the time. With short and accented notes invoking a quick and bright style characteristic of the early classical era, Mozart playfully experiments with dramatic changes in dynamics and note duration. With new thematic material being introduced and jumping from instrument to instrument with endless variations, the piece remains energetic throughout its lows and highs. In the development, offbeats and melodies generate tension that builds until it explodes as it resolves in the recapitulation. After a journey through numerous keys and styles, the Symphony ends with a strong and bombastic finish.

Sibelius Symphony No. 2 (1901)

IV. Finale

Premiering in 1902, Sibelius composed the spirited and lively Symphony no. 2, which was composed of four movements: Allegretto, Ma Ruba, Vivacissimo, and Finale. It had nearly taken Sibelius a year to perfect this symphony and had even made some changes after its premiere. In contrast to the buoyant melodies, Symphony No. 2 dedicates Sibelius' daughters, contrasting detrimental events in Sibelius' life to the lighthearted movement.

Symphony No. 2 is a confession to the soul; according to Sibelius, initiating the fourth movement with a string, nonchalant melody with many contrasting dynamics is heard throughout the stage. Symphony No. 2 experiments with dynamics and tempo to forge distinctions between the melody and the build-up towards the melody. As the piece continues, cellos play a scale passage, simulating a seesaw, slowly drowning away into the melody the woodwinds would play. Violins would later join in, mimicking the fast-paced bow strokes of the cellos, which contrast with the legato bow strokes utilized in the melody, the climax. Shortly after, the woodwinds and string sections would switch places; woodwind instruments would play a sad, emotional solo. Woodwinds would play a slow melody, as string instruments play fast to help escalate the piece. Speeding up and leading into the song's finale, the melody first heard at the beginning, but significantly more powerful and happy. The piece ends in a grand finale as all the instruments gradually get louder, getting the audience on the edge of their seat as the symphony repeats the lovely melody for the last time.

Symphony No. 2 was a composition intended to illustrate how one can turn unfortunate occurrences into an exquisite work of art. As tragedy strikes, one must remind each other how society should appreciate the past and look towards the future rather than hold on to those desires to fix the past and recover what was once lost.

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