



# Program Notes

for kids

**Mozart Birthday Bash**  
**Saturday, January 14, 2017**  
**8:00 p.m.**  
**Michigan Theater**

**Tchaikovsky** Suite No. 4, “Mozartiana”  
**Mozart** Piano Concerto No. 21

*Intermission*

**Mozart** Symphony No. 39

# Suite No. 4, “Mozartiana”

by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

## About the Music

### What kind of piece is this?

This is a *suite*: a set of short instrumental or orchestral pieces performed on a concert. *Mozartiana* is a series of compositions written by Mozart that Tchaikovsky arranged for orchestra.

### When was it written?

Tchaikovsky wrote *Mozartiana* in 1887 for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mozart’s famous opera, *Don Giovanni*.

### What is it about?

Tchaikovsky loved and admired Mozart and wrote *Mozartiana* as a tribute to the beloved composer. The piece consists of four *orchestrations*, or arrangements for orchestra, of piano pieces composed by Mozart. Tchaikovsky wanted to highlight some smaller, less popular works of Mozart that he thought deserved attention.



A young Tchaikovsky (far left) with his family in 1848.

## About the Composer

**Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky** | Born May 7, 1840 in Votkinsk, Russia | Died November 6, 1893 in St. Petersburg, Russia

### Family & Career

Tchaikovsky grew up with four brothers, two sisters, and a French nanny. When he was 10, he was sent to a boarding school 800 miles away from his family home. While there, he entertained himself by going to the opera with his friends – hearing the works of Rossini, Verdi, and Mozart – and by improvising variations on the piano. When a School of Music opened in St. Petersburg in 1862, Tchaikovsky became one of its first students. Thanks to his wealthy patroness Nadezhda von Meck, who supported him financially for many years, Tchaikovsky became Russia’s first full-time professional musician.

## Music

Tchaikovsky was the first Russian composer to gain international respect. During his lifetime, his works were frequently played in concerts in both Russia and Western Europe. Today he is best known for his three ballets (*Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, and *Sleeping Beauty*), six symphonies, and the *1812 Overture*.

### Listen for...

The first movement is a *gigue*, a type of dance. Listen for *syncopations*, accents and rhythms placed where you wouldn’t expect them.

The fourth movement is a *theme and variations*. Tchaikovsky takes a main melody and changes it bit by bit. Here, there are ten variations. The third variation features the flute. In the sixth the woodwinds play really fast passages. The ninth is a very beautiful and sweet violin solo. And the tenth highlights the clarinet.

### Fun Facts

The music from Tchaikovsky’s ballet *Sleeping Beauty* was used in the Disney movie of the same name.

# Piano Concerto No. 21

by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

## About the Music

### What kind of piece is this?

A *concerto* is a piece of music written for a solo instrument with an orchestra. In this case, the pianist is the soloist, so he sits at the front of the stage and plays the most important part. In a concerto, the soloist and orchestra can interact in different ways: the soloist could play alone, the orchestra could play alone, the orchestra could play something to support the soloist, or the soloist could join in like a member of the orchestra. Concertos usually have three *movements*, or sections.

### When was it written?

Mozart finished his *Piano Concerto No. 21* in 1785. At its first performance, he played the piano part himself. He performed his piano concertos to show off his own piano playing as well as his skills as a composer.

Mozart was known for finishing pieces very quickly. He completed his *Concerto No. 21* only a month after his previous concerto, and then wrote four more in less than two years.



The second movement of the Piano Concerto was used in the soundtrack for the 1967 Swedish film *Elvira Madigan*. The movie is about the romance between a tighrope walker and a military lieutenant.

### Listen for...

the *dotted* (or uneven) *rhythms* in the slow introduction. This rhythmic pattern is meant to sound noble, like a king's procession. They sound kind of like a heartbeat: "LONG short LONG short."

The third movement is a *minuet*, a type of swinging dance. The beats feel like "STRONG weak weak." Feel the rhythm sway back and forth.

The last movement is really fast. Listen as the bassoon and flute take turns playing the melody.

# Symphony No. 39

by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

## About the Music

### What kind of piece is this?

A *symphony* is a long piece of music that typically contains four *movements*. These *movements*, or sections, each have their own characteristics. Some may be upbeat and lively, while others may be slower and more lyrical.

### When was it written?

Mozart finished his last three symphonies in 1788: *Symphonies No. 39, 40 and 41*.

### What is it about?

No one knows why Mozart wrote this piece. All that's known is that he wrote *Symphony No. 39* at breakneck speed. This symphony is the least often performed of his last three, but is still a popular work. Despite having no specific story to tell, *Symphony No. 39* shows off Mozart's ability to write a piece full of different emotions and characters: from regal to lyrical to sad.



*In Mozart's hometown of Salzburg, Germany, you can buy any Mozart souvenir you can imagine: from chocolate "Mozart balls" to Mozart rubber duckies, like these.*

## About the Composer

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** | Born January 27, 1756 in Salzburg, Austria | Died December 5, 1791 in Vienna, Austria

### Fun Facts

Mozart loved animals. He sent his family dog, a terrier named Bimperl, notes from all over Europe when he was on tour. In London, he once broke off a concert to run after a cat that had wandered in. His other pets were a grasshopper, a canary, and a starling.

Even as a child, Mozart was always falling in love with pretty ladies. He once had a crush on Marie Antoinette, the future Queen of France. Much to her amusement, he told her with complete confidence that one day he would marry her.

### Family & Career

Mozart's parents were Leopold Mozart, a composer and music teacher, and Anna Maria Mozart. He was the youngest of seven children, but only Wolfgang and his sister, Maria Anna, lived past infancy. Mozart was a musical prodigy. When he was five years old, he was already composing and performing for kings and queens. From the time he was six until he was seventeen, his father took him and his sister on trips across Europe to perform. Mozart married the singer Constanze Weber in 1782. They had six children, but only two lived past infancy.

Mozart was as famous in his own lifetime as he is today. He composed all the time – while eating, while visiting with friends, while playing pool – and finished compositions very quickly. But he was very frustrating to work with: he usually put things off until the last minute and did not manage his money well. He died when he was 35

years old. After his death, the composer Joseph Haydn said that the world “will not see such talent again in 100 years.”

### Music

Despite his short life, Mozart wrote over six-hundred pieces of music, including twenty operas and forty-one symphonies. It would take more than eight days to listen to all of Mozart's music.