

Voices Unbound 27 March 2027

Mozart (1756–91)	Concerto for Clarinet in A Major, K. 622 Allegro Adagio Rondo: Allegro
Gershwin (1898–1937) (arr. Villani)	Summertime
McHugh (1894–1969) (arr. Hemmer)	I Can't Give You Anything But Love
Traditional (arr. Villani)	When the Saints Go Marchin' In
Mahler (1860–1911)	Symphony No. 1 in D Major, "Titan" Langsam, Schleppend Kräftig bewegt, doch nicht zu Schnell Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen Stürmisch bewegt

Most of today's readers know that pop icon Michael Jackson did not have a normal childhood and consequently never really grew up, thanks to his father's management of the family's musical talent. Michael's 18th century counterpart, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91), also had a father (Leopold) who promoted and benefited from his children's talents, taking them on concert tours when Mozart was only six. And like Michael, Wolfgang often exhibited childish tendencies in adulthood (and a bathroom sense of humor, if one reads his letters). However, he astounded the public with his performance skills, his memory, and his ability to improvise new compositions at the keyboard. As a composer, he was gifted in all genres and wrote over 600 works in his brief lifespan of thirty-five years. He worked in various positions in Salzburg, Austria (his birthplace) until 1781, when his employer Archbishop Colloredo gave him the boot (literally, according to some accounts), and the composer decided to risk being a freelancer in Vienna. That is where he worked for the last ten years of his life. In his final year, Mozart composed many works, including his last piano concerto, the clarinet concerto, a string quintet, parts of the Requiem, and the operas *La Clemenza di Tito* and *Die Zauberflöte*. There are many theories about the composer's premature death on 5 December 1791 (one rather fanciful one was presented in the film *Amadeus*), but many Mozart scholars today think he was the victim of either typhoid or rheumatic fever. He left his widow and two sons (aged seven years and five months) in difficult financial circumstances, causing Constanze to hire some of Mozart's students to finish the Requiem for the commission money.

The modern clarinet was "invented" about 1700; however, it did not become truly popular until the publication of a clarinet concerto in 1722. Mozart thought its timbre was quite pleasing and considered it to be closest to the human voice. Add to that the fact that he had a Masonic friend, Anton Stadler, who was a clarinet virtuoso, and you understand the genesis of this concerto. Stadler had jerry-rigged his instrument with supplementary keys and tubing to allow for additional bass notes, producing an

instrument that is now known as a basset clarinet. Today's performers on the standard clarinet must adjust some of the notes in Mozart's concerto because of the modern instrument's more limited range. It is the extremes of register that you will probably find most striking upon hearing Mozart's Clarinet Concerto; both the high- and the low pitches of the instrument are on display. As usual, Mozart composed the work in a very short amount of time, and Stadler played the premiere on 16 October 1791. The opening Allegro comprises about half the concerto's playing time. It demonstrates the composer's skill at writing beautiful melodies, including a secondary theme in the first movement that surprises us when the clarinetist introduces it in a minor key. There is no real cadenza in the concerto, although there are a few places where soloists may insert a few extra notes or a slightly longer improvisation. The Adagio is exquisite, but before it gets too sentimental, Mozart wisely launches the final Allegro with a dance-like rondo theme that returns several times in between alternating episodes. The capabilities of the solo instrument and the instrumentalist are showcased throughout this concerto, an important piece in the repertoire and one that has influenced all subsequent clarinet concertos.

Brooklyn-born George Gershwin (1898-1937) was the son of Russian immigrants who first bought a piano for his older brother Ira. George usurped the instrument, quit school in 1914 to work for a local music publishing company as a song demonstrator, and began creating piano rolls. He was only twenty when "La, La, Lucille" played on Broadway and "Swanee" became a hit. Ira, the brother who was pushed off the piano bench, was George's lyricist for some of his best-known tunes. At one point George studied harmony, counterpoint, and orchestration with Edward Kilenyi, Sr (Edward Jr taught piano at FSU 1953-83). Gershwin's 1935 opera *Porgy and Bess* is the most frequently performed American opera today. Many of the songs from that opera became hits on their own, including "Summertime." Gershwin's contemporary Jimmy McHugh (1894-1969) was also a song-plugger (for Irving Berlin's publishing company). He became one of the most prolific songwriters in the first half of the twentieth century, working with a number of different lyricists along the way. From 1930 to 1935, he collaborated with Dorothy Fields on the music for 30 films, including *Cuban Love Song* and *Dinner at Eight*. Their first big hit was the all-black Broadway show *Blackbirds* of 1928, which included "I Can't Give You Anything But Love." Louis Armstrong, one of the most influential jazz performers ever, helped solidify the song's place in history by recording his iconic version in 1929. And it was Armstrong's 1938 recording of the traditional African-American tune "When the Saints Go Marchin' In" that resulted in that tune's international popularity.

DID YOU KNOW? Frank Sinatra once said, "Louis Armstrong was the father of all of us who ever tried to swing a note."

Bohemian-born Gustav Mahler (1860-1911) was considered a child prodigy and began studying piano, composition, and conducting at the Vienna Conservatory at age fifteen. He earned his first conducting appointment in Austria five years later. During his lifetime, his reputation was not based on his compositions but on his life as a conductor, which included appointments with the Vienna Philharmonic and being named Artistic Director of the Vienna Court Opera (1897-1907). His active conducting schedule allowed little time for writing, but Mahler did compose numerous songs, including song cycles for voice and orchestra, and ten symphonies. Despite dealing with heart disease and the death of his four-year old daughter in 1907, he continued conducting on several continents, and in 1909, he began a two- year tenure as conductor of the New York Philharmonic. A heart infection caused Mahler's death at age fifty. The composer provided insight into his music and his character in a letter written to his wife prior to their marriage: "The important thing is never to let oneself be guided by the opinion of one's

contemporaries and, in both one's life and one's work, to continue steadfastly on one's way without letting oneself be either defeated by failure or diverted by applause." Symphony No. 1, "Titan," is scored for a huge orchestra of four each of flutes, oboes, and clarinets, three bassoons, seven horns, five trumpets, four trombones, tuba, two timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, gong, harp, and strings. Mahler began composing this work in 1884 and completed it four years later. Thematically he incorporates music from his own *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (*Songs of a Wayfarer*), which he worked on during the same time. The November 1889 premiere in Budapest received mixed reactions, some rather hostile, and friends convinced Mahler to provide a program to help listeners navigate the complexity, variety, and sheer wealth of musical materials. Post-composition, he added references to Jean Paul's novel *Titan* at the beginning of each movement. In a subsequent performance, however, he eliminated these as being "inadequate" and "misleading" and he kept only the overall title. In addition he removed an Andante from his original five-movement conception. Notable in the opening *Langsam* (Slow) is the ethereal atmosphere achieved by muted strings on a sustained pitch. Woodwinds play a series of descending fourths; the importance of this interval is soon apparent as it forms an integral part of the primary folk-like theme and also permeates the movement as a cuckoo's song. Horn calls play a significant role, and Mahler makes good use of his seven horn players. The bucolic mood turns ominous with low pitches in the contrabassoon and string basses, but danger is averted, and all ends optimistically. *Kraftig bewegt, doch nicht zu Schnell* (Vigorously but not rushed) is in standard ternary form (ABA) with an abbreviated return to A. Cellos and basses begin the movement with a repeated descending fourth out of which springs a charming Austrian Ländler. An abrupt *accelerando* races to conclude this dance section. The trio is introduced by a quiet horn solo, and various instruments have cameo appearances before the return of the Ländler. With the timpani repeating yet another descending fourth, the third movement, *Feierlich und gemessen, ohne zu schleppen* (Solemn and measured, without dragging) begins with an unlikely soloist—a double bass playing a stepwise folk tune (a minor key variation of "Bruder Jakob" or "Frère Jacques"). Overlapping each other as in a round, bassoon, cello, tuba, clarinet, and viola, among others, imitate this melody while the timpanist continues the descending fourth ostinato. In contrast to this clock-like regularity, the middle section features a *rubato* tempo, as if a dance tune were slowing down and accelerating at whim. The combination of oboes, clarinets, and trumpets, with the addition of bass drum and cymbals, suggests a Jewish *klezmer* band, and Mahler indicates "with parody" in the score where the percussion battery joins in. When the A theme returns, it is much freer, occasionally becoming even raucous, but the movement ends in a subdued manner with the repeated fourths in the timpani and double basses. This only makes the crash of winds, bass drum, and rolling timpani more surprising as they launch the finale, *Sturmisch bewegt* (Wild and tempestuous). From its chaotic opening to its triumphant conclusion, this massive final movement lasts about twenty minutes. Mahler revisits earlier melodies, casts fragments in the brass instruments among swirling strings, and generally overwhelms with the profusion of ideas and instruments. His treatment of the orchestra is carefully calculated to provide timbral variety and clarity as well as balance even when the abundance of material threatens to spin out of control. The symphony concludes with the seven horns outshining even the five trumpets!