

# Program Notes

by April L. Racana

16  
Apr

18  
Apr

21  
Apr

## William Walton (1902-1983) Crown Imperial

An English composer, known particularly for his orchestral works, William Walton emerged between Ralph Vaughan Williams and Benjamin Britten. Raised as a chorister in his father's church choir, his exposure to Anglican anthems as well as non-sacred music at home influenced him greatly during his lifetime. Not only did he compose numerous choral and solo vocal works throughout his career, but he also created a great many works in various instrumental genres, including works for brass and band ensembles, chamber and solo instrumental works, and various works for stage and film, some of which have been adapted for orchestral performances.

In 1936, Walton was commissioned by the BBC to compose a work for the upcoming coronation festivities, with the request that it be similar in character to previous works composed for the royal family by Edward Elgar who had passed away in 1934. As it turned out, King Edward VIII who was supposed to be crowned on May 12, 1937 abdicated his role to his younger brother Albert, who was subsequently crowned as King George VI on the same day.

The composer is believed to have taken the title from William Dunbar's poem "In Honour of the City of London" which includes the lines: 'Empress of towns, exalt in honour; In beauty bearing the crown imperial; Sweet paradise excelling in pleasure; London, thou art the flower of Cities all.' In fact the second line was quoted at the beginning of his original score. Some scholars also acknowledge that Walton was already arranging a setting for the poem for the Leeds Festival in 1937.

In 1953, Walton was given the opportunity to revise the same march to be performed as part of the festivities for the coronation of Albert's daughter, Elizabeth II, where this work, along with a new piece "Orb and Sceptre", were performed. At that time the composer indicated that William Shakespeare's 'Henry V' may have provided the inspiration for both works, quoting the line: 'Tis not the balm, the sceptre and the ball; The sword, the mace, the crown imperial; The intertissued robe of gold and pearl...' "Crown Imperial" would appear again at a more recent royal affair, when it was played as a recessional for Queen Elizabeth's grandson Prince William's marriage to Catherine Middleton in 2011.

"Crown Imperial" is presented in the traditional ABABC form found in many British marches. The TPO will be performing a revised shorter version for this concert series with cuts authorized by the composer in 1963. Opening in the key of C major, the work then transitions to A-flat for the more lyrical trio section, before restating and developing both, leading to the brief but truly majestic coda finale.

**Work composed:** 1937 **World premiere:** 12th May, 1937 at the coronation of King George VI

**Instrumentation:** 3 flutes (3rd doubling on piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (snare drum, tenor drum, bass drum, triangle, cymbals, tam-tam, glockenspiel, tubular bells), harp, organ, strings

16  
Apr18  
Apr21  
Apr

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

## Piano Concerto No. 26 in D major, K. 537, "Coronation"

By the time Mozart had left the service of the Archbishop in Salzburg to pursue his musical career in Vienna in 1781, he had already composed six piano concertos. But it was during his years in Vienna that he not only relied on additional compositions in this genre to establish himself both as a composer and as a pianist, but also depended on them for financial support. Some might say he was in fact shrewd in his timing for composing and presenting some of these works for public, as many were premiered during the Lenten season

when the majority of theatres in the region were closed, so that competition for an audience was greatly reduced.

His business acumen aside, Mozart's renown for his mastery as a concerto composer continues to this day. Scholars point to his development as a composer through his various concerti, the first of which was composed when he was still a child at the age of eleven. The last was composed in 1791, the same year of his death. The first concerti were more along the lines of arrangements of other composers' sonatas, with the addition of orchestral interludes and accompaniments. But it wasn't long before he created his own thematic material on his way to composing 27 piano concertos, more than any other composer.

The 'Coronation' concerto, as it became known due to the publisher's reference, was composed in 1788, but was not premiered until April of 1789, with the composer performing it in Dresden as part of a tour of Germany. The following year, Mozart would return to Germany for the festivities surrounding the coronation of Leopold II. In October of 1790, the composer gave a concert in Frankfurt as part of the celebratory events, including this concerto, which is how the work came to be given its subtitle. Writing to his wife Constanze, the composer indicated that the performance was "a splendid success from the point of view of honor and glory, but a failure as far as money was concerned."

Mozart performing his own work meant the written copy of the score only needed a framework for the piano part, so the original score often left much of the left hand portion virtually unwritten. The first printed edition (1794) included 'suggestions' to fill in what had been left to the composer's memory or imagination. However most 'top' soloists now are expected to attempt to re-create the missing parts, including the cadenza, having done extensive research of their own.

**Work composed:** 24th February in 1788    **World premiere:** 14th April, 1789, at the court of Dresden, solo piano by the composer

**Instrumentation:** flute, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, strings, solo piano

## Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36

Tchaikovsky dedicated this piece to his ‘best friend’ Nadezhda von Meck, and to our benefit wrote her at great length, revealing the intent behind his writing of this symphony. Mme von Meck had recently been widowed and, upon discovering Tchaikovsky’s music, as well as his need for financial support, she generously provided this sustenance from afar. It seems the composer appreciated not only her monetary assistance, but depended on correspondence with her for support as well.

At the time that he began writing this work in the spring of 1877, Tchaikovsky faced a major turning point in his personal life. Only a few months earlier he had received his first commission from Mme von Meck, which gave him the freedom to compose without worrying about his financial situation. However, he found himself in a position to be married, against his will it seems, to Antonina, a young student at the Conservatory. The turmoil that enveloped his life at that point became an integral part of his music, as he indicated in his correspondences.

Regarding the opening fanfare, heard throughout the first movement, Tchaikovsky states that it is “the seed of the whole symphony.... This is fate, this is that fateful force which prevents the impulse to happiness from attaining its goal.” The second movement, he stated, was intended to express ‘a weary regret for all that is hopelessly gone’. And in the third movement, the tunes alternate between that of “drunken peasants” and “a street song” representing “the elusive images which rush past in the imagination when you have drunk a little wine and experience the first stage of intoxication.”

In the final movement, Tchaikovsky incorporates the traditional folk song ‘In the field a little birch tree stood’, a reference to his young wife. The ‘fate’ theme, however, returns in full force to indicate the ongoing turmoil in his life, as he explains:

16  
Apr18  
Apr21  
Apr

“the irrepressible fate again appears and reminds you of yourself... but others have not even turned around, they have not glanced at you and they have not noticed that you are solitary and sad.”

In the end, the composer attempts to parallel Beethoven’s triumphant finale, when he suggests:

“If within yourself you find no reasons for joy, look at others. Go among the people. Observe how they can enjoy themselves, surrendering themselves wholeheartedly to joyful feelings.”

**Work composed:** 1877~1878 **World premiere:** 22nd February, 1878, at St. Petersburg

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, triangle), strings

16  
Apr

18  
Apr

21  
Apr

April L. Racana / Music Specialist at Nishimachi International School where she has taught since 1992. She completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana (BS/Piano Pedagogy) and her graduate studies at San Francisco State University (MA/Music), as well as a post-graduate fellowship at Northwestern University, and the Japan Studies Program at International Christian University.