

Linz and Bohemia

Saturday, February 14, 2026 · 15:30 · Musikverein

Andris Nelsons, conductor

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	MOZART 1756–1791 <i>Symphony No. 36 in C major, 'Linz', K. 425</i>	28'
2	DVORAK 1841–1904 <i>Symphony No. 6 in D major, Op. 60</i>	42'
TOTAL MUSIC		70'

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

1756–1791

Symphony No. 36 in C major, 'Linz', K. 425

THE COMPOSER

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart needs little introduction. Born in Salzburg in 1756, he was a prodigy whose talents were cultivated and exhibited across Europe by his father Leopold. By the time he composed this concerto in 1779, the twenty-three-year-old Mozart was restless in provincial Salzburg, dreaming of Vienna and larger stages. Within two years he would make the move that defined his mature career.

Less well known is his sister Maria Anna, called “Nannerl,” five years his senior. She was an equally brilliant pianist as a child, and the siblings toured together as wonders of nature until Nannerl’s touring career ended when she was about seventeen. Following the customs of the time, she stayed at home while Wolfgang continued traveling with their father. The brother and sister remained close, and this concerto was written for the two of them to play.

ABOUT THE WORK

The ‘Linz’ Symphony owes its existence to a stopover and a scheduling crisis. In the autumn of 1783 Mozart and his wife Constanze were travelling back to Vienna from a long, fraught visit to his father in Salzburg. They broke their journey in the Upper Austrian town of Linz, where the local Count Thun received them with open-handed hospitality and promptly arranged a concert. The trouble was that Mozart, by his own account, had not a single symphony of his own with him. In a famous letter to his father dated 31 October 1783, he wrote that he was composing a new symphony ‘at breakneck speed’ for the concert, to be given on 4 November.

28 minutes

That letter has made the 'Linz' a byword for Mozartian fluency: a full four-movement symphony conceived, written out, rehearsed, and performed in a matter of days. Whether every note was newly minted in Linz or whether Mozart drew on sketches he carried in his head, the result shows no trace of haste. It is the grandest symphony he had yet composed, scored for an orchestra with trumpets and timpani that lend it a festive, ceremonial brightness suited to a public occasion.

Its most celebrated feature comes at the very opening. The 'Linz' is the first of Mozart's symphonies to begin with a slow introduction, a stately Adagio that precedes the fast first movement proper. The device was not his invention; he had absorbed it from the symphonies of Joseph Haydn, the older master he revered and whose example hangs over this whole score. By prefacing the Allegro with a weighty, harmonically searching prelude, Mozart announces a new seriousness of scale and ambition, and points the way toward the still grander symphonies that lay just ahead, the 'Prague' and the final trilogy.

It was written at a moment when Mozart, settled in Vienna since 1781, was establishing himself as the city's leading composer-pianist. It catches him in full maturity yet still buoyant, the gravity of the slow introduction always balanced by an irrepressible forward energy. For a work supposedly dashed off to fill a gap in a count's calendar, it has held the stage for nearly two and a half centuries.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The slow introduction (Adagio) opens with a grand dotted gesture and then turns unexpectedly inward, the harmony darkening and the music seeming to ask a question before the main movement answers it. When the Allegro spiritoso arrives, notice how completely the mood lifts: bright, propulsive, full of the trumpet-and-drum sparkle that marks this as music for a public hall.

The second movement, an Andante in F major, is one of Mozart's most unusual slow movements: it keeps the trumpets and timpani in play, giving the songful melody a faint undertow of ceremony and even melancholy beneath its grace. Listen for the way the soft drum-taps shadow the lyrical line.

The third movement is a sturdy, dancing Menuetto, its rustic central Trio handing the spotlight to the oboe and bassoon in a passage of countrified charm, a nod, perhaps, to the Upper Austrian town that gave the work its name. The finale (Presto) is pure high spirits: a fleet, witty sonata-form movement that

...races through its material with operatic timing, full of sudden dynamic surprises, and brings the symphony to a brilliant, exhilarating close.

Antonin Dvorak

42 minutes

1841–1904

Symphony No. 6 in D major, Op. 60

THE COMPOSER

Antonin Dvorak was born on September 8, 1841, in Nelahozeves, a small village north of Prague in Bohemia. The eldest of fourteen children, he was expected to follow his father into the butcher's trade, but his unmistakable musical talent led him on a different path. After studying at the Prague Organ School, Dvorak spent years playing viola in theatre orchestras while composing in his spare time, often in conditions of considerable hardship.

His breakthrough came when Johannes Brahms, serving on a jury for a composition prize, recognized Dvorak's exceptional gifts and recommended him to his own publisher, Simrock. The resulting Slavonic Dances (1878) were an immediate international success. Following in the footsteps of Bedrich Smetana, Dvorak went on to achieve worldwide fame as a Czech composer. His time as director of the National Conservatory in New York (1892-1895) produced some of his most beloved works, including the "New World" Symphony and the Cello Concerto.

ABOUT THE WORK

Dvořák's Sixth Symphony is the work in which a regional Bohemian talent stepped onto the international stage. By 1880 Dvořák was no longer the obscure Prague violist of a decade earlier: championed by Brahms, taken up by the influential critic Eduard Hanslick, and published by Brahms's own house of Simrock, he had begun to attract attention across the German-speaking world. The Slavonic Dances had made his name; what he lacked was a major symphony to confirm it.

The opportunity came from Vienna. The conductor Hans Richter, chief of the Vienna Philharmonic and one of the most powerful figures in European musical life, had conducted Dvořák's Third Slavonic Rhapsody in 1879 and embraced the composer warmly; Dvořák recalled that Richter 'kissed me on the spot'. Richter invited a new symphony for his Vienna orchestra, and Dvořák, elated, composed the Sixth in 1880, dedicating it to Richter. It was, in effect, his bid for the central European symphonic tradition.

That ambition is written into the music's very design. The Sixth is openly modelled on Brahms's Second Symphony, completed only three years earlier: both are in the warm, pastoral key of D major,

both share a comparable scale and a similar emotional climate of lyrical expansiveness, and Dvořák's finale in particular echoes the shape and surge of Brahms's. Far from concealing the debt, Dvořák wore it proudly. This was homage to the older master who had done so much for him, an announcement that he could write within the great Viennese line.

Yet the symphony is unmistakably his own, and unmistakably Czech. Vienna, as it turned out, did not give the premiere. The Vienna performance was repeatedly postponed, officially because of Richter's illness but very probably also because of anti-Czech feeling in the city, and the first performance was finally given in Prague on 25 March 1881 by Adolf Čech. Richter conducted it in London the following year, and it was the first of Dvořák's symphonies to be published, originally as his 'No. 1'.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The first movement (*Allegro non tanto*) unfolds with a sunlit, songful breadth that immediately recalls the Brahms Second. Listen for the gently rocking main theme in the strings and the way the whole movement seems to breathe rather than drive. Its closing pages build to a broad, glowing climax of real grandeur.

The slow movement (*Adagio*) is the symphony's lyrical heart: a long, tender meditation in B-flat major, rich in woodwind solos and the kind of warm, vocal melody Dvořák wrote better than almost anyone. Let it spread out; the rewards are in its patience.

The third movement is the symphony's most famous stroke: not a conventional scherzo but a *Furiant*, a fiery Bohemian folk dance built on the clash of duple and triple rhythms. This is where Dvořák plants his national flag, the music stamping and whirling with peasant energy before a calmer, pastoral Trio (featuring the piccolo) offers a moment of breath. The finale (*Allegro con spirito*) returns to the Brahmsian model, opening quietly and gathering momentum through a sequence of ever-broadening themes until it arrives at a jubilant, blazing D-major coda: the sound of a composer who knows he has arrived.

FURTHER READING

ACCESSIBLE **Mozart: The Reign of Love**

Jan Swafford, Harper Perennial 2021

A full modern life of Mozart that follows him through the Vienna years, including the 1783 visit to Linz where he wrote the ‘Linz’ Symphony in a matter of days.

ACCESSIBLE **Dvořák: Romantic Music's Most Versatile Genius**

David Hurwitz, Amadeus Press 2005

A lively, opinionated guide to Dvořák’s music as a whole, useful for placing the Sixth Symphony among his orchestral works.

DEEPER **Mozart's Symphonies: Context, Performance Practice, Reception**

Neal Zaslaw, Oxford University Press 1991

The standard scholarly study of Mozart’s symphonies, with the context of the ‘Linz’ Symphony and how orchestras of the time played such works.

SOURCES

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2. Andris Nelsons, Music Director, Boston Symphony Orchestra. <https://www.bso.org/profiles/andris-nelsons>
3. Andris Nelsons, Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andris_Nelsons
4. Symphony No. 36 (Mozart), Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._36_\(Mozart\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._36_(Mozart))
5. Linzer Sinfonie, Wikipedia (de). https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linzer_Sinfonie
6. Symphony No. 6 (Dvořák), Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._6_\(Dvořák\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_No._6_(Dvořák))
7. 6. Sinfonie (Dvořák), Wikipedia (de). [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/6._Sinfonie_\(Dvořák\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/6._Sinfonie_(Dvořák))
8. Mozart: The Reign of Love, Open Library. <https://openlibrary.org/isbn/9780062433619>
9. Dvořák: Romantic Music's Most Versatile Genius, Open Library. <https://openlibrary.org/isbn/9781574671070>
10. Mozart's Symphonies: Context, Performance Practice, Reception, Open Library. <https://openlibrary.org/isbn/9780198162865>



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<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/wp-2026-02-14-nelsons>

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