

WIENER PHILHARMONIKER

Mozart in G Minor, Métaboles, and a Boléro in Linz

Thursday, December 3, 2026 · 19:30 · Brucknerhaus

Alain Altinoglu, conductor

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	MOZART 1756–1791 <i>Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550</i>	32'
2	DUTILLEUX 1916–2013 <i>Métaboles</i>	17'
3	RAVEL 1875–1937 <i>Boléro</i>	15'
TOTAL MUSIC		64'

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

1756–1791

Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550

32 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

In the summer of 1788 Mozart wrote three symphonies in quick succession: No. 39 in E flat, No. 40 in G minor and No. 41 in C, the “Jupiter”. He kept a catalogue of his finished works, so the dates are exact: he entered the G minor Symphony on 25 July 1788, between the other two. Nobody knows for certain what occasion he had in mind. Plans for a series of subscription concerts that summer have left little trace, and it is not clear whether they took place.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

I. Molto allegro. There is no slow introduction. The symphony begins with a murmuring accompaniment in the lower strings, and over it the violins whisper the famous main theme, a sighing figure of two short notes and a longer one, repeated with urgent insistence. The second theme, in B flat major, is smoother and passed between strings and woodwinds. In the development Mozart takes the sighing figure through remote keys and sets it against itself in counterpoint.

II. Andante. The slow movement moves to E flat major and to a gentle 6/8 time. It opens with the violas and violins entering one after another on repeated notes, building up a soft chord step by step. The mood is calm on the surface, but chromatic turns and unexpected changes of key keep it uneasy.

III. Menuetto: Allegretto. This is not a courtly dance. The minuet is gruff and heavily accented, with phrases that cut across the three-beat bar and make it hard to dance to. The trio in G major offers a brief, gentle release, with strings and winds taking turns, before the minuet returns.

IV. Allegro assai. The finale opens with a theme that leaps up through a chord like a rocket, followed by a loud, rushing answer from the whole orchestra. A more lyrical second theme gives brief contrast, but the development is one of the most turbulent passages Mozart wrote, twisting the opening figure through harsh harmonies. The movement ends as it began, in G minor.

Henri Dutilleux

1916–2013

Métaboles

17 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Henri Dutilleux worked slowly and threw a great deal away, and his catalogue is small as a result. *Métaboles* took him years. It was commissioned by George Szell for the Cleveland Orchestra's fortieth anniversary season in 1958 and 1959, but Dutilleux did not finish it until 1964. Szell conducted the Cleveland Orchestra in the first performance on 14 January 1965.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Incantatoire. The piece opens with a series of pungent chords in the woodwinds, circling around the note E, punctuated by plucked strings and harp. It has an incantatory, ritual quality, and many listeners hear an echo of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*.

Linéaire. The strings, divided into many parts, spin out long, slow lines in a luminous, otherworldly texture. Listen for how the idea has grown out of something the strings touched on briefly in the first section.

Obsessionnel. The brass take over with clipped, aggressive figures that keep coming back in altered forms, as the title suggests.

Torpide. A slow, drowsy section led by the percussion, a slowed-down memory of what came before, with shimmering, fragmentary sounds.

Flamboyant. The full orchestra gathers the threads of the earlier sections. Near the end, the chords from the very opening return, and the piece rushes to a brilliant, exhilarating close.

Maurice Ravel

1875–1937

Boléro

15 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Boléro began as a practical solution. In 1928 the dancer Ida Rubinstein asked Ravel for music for a ballet, and he decided to write something new, based on the bolero, a Spanish dance in triple time. On holiday in the resort of Saint-Jean-de-Luz he found the tune: a long, sinuous melody with an insistent quality that he planned to repeat again and again without developing it, changing only the orchestration and building the volume.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The rhythm. A snare drum begins, very quietly, with a two-bar rhythmic pattern that it will repeat throughout the piece. Listen to how it grows from a whisper to a roar without ever changing.

Two tunes, many colours. Over the drum and plucked strings, a flute plays the first melody. It is followed by a second melody, with a more jazzy, bluesy inflection. The two alternate, each passed to a new instrument or combination of instruments: clarinet, bassoon, the high E flat clarinet, oboe d'amore, then tenor and soprano saxophones, and on to trombone and full sections. Listen for the passage where horn, celesta and piccolos play the tune together in different keys, creating an organ-like, slightly eerie sound.

The crescendo. The whole piece is one long crescendo from pianissimo to fortissimo, all in C major and all at the same tempo. Only at the very end does Ravel break the pattern: the music lurches suddenly into E major, then back, and the whole orchestra collapses in a final crash.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/wp-2026-12-03-altinoglu>

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