

WIENER PHILHARMONIKER

Mutter Plays Penderecki, and the Boy Korngold

Saturday, April 17, 2027 · 15:30 · Musikverein

Lorenzo Viotti, conductor · Anne-Sophie Mutter, violin

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	PENDERECKI 1933–2020 <i>Violin Concerto No. 2 'Metamorphosen'</i>	38'
2	KORNGOLD 1897–1957 <i>Sinfonietta in B major, Op. 5</i>	43'
TOTAL MUSIC		81'

Krzysztof Penderecki

1933–2020

Violin Concerto No. 2 'Metamorphosen'

38 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Krzysztof Penderecki wrote his Second Violin Concerto for the violinist who plays it in these concerts. He and Anne-Sophie Mutter had performed Prokofiev's First Violin Concerto together in 1988, and the idea of a concerto for her came out of

that meeting. The commission came from Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk, the public broadcaster in Leipzig. Penderecki worked on the score, with interruptions, from 1992 to 1995, and Mutter gave the first performance in Leipzig on 24 June 1995 with the MDR Symphony Orchestra under Mariss Jansons. The concerto is dedicated to her. She went on to record it with the London Symphony Orchestra, the composer conducting, and the recording won a Grammy Award in 1999.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The opening belongs to the strings: a steady, pulsing tread that one critic likened to a heartbeat, with the violas prominent in setting out the theme. Fix the small chromatic figure in your ear here, because it is the seed of the whole piece. When the soloist enters, the line climbs quickly into the high register and the tension rises with it.

After that, follow the changes of mood more than the changes of theme. The same motif comes back as angry protest, as slow lament and, in a fast scherzo-like episode, as something close to satire. The orchestra is not there to accompany. Soloist and players argue, interrupt and console each other, and some of the most telling passages are duets between the violin and a single section, the violas above all.

Two stretches stand out. One is a slower, inward passage where the violin sings quietly over very little. The other is the cadenza, which is long, ferocious and written in the tradition of the nineteenth-century virtuoso concerto, though the harmony is of its own time.

The ending is the passage that writers on the piece return to most. The energy drains away over a long-held note deep in the double basses, with cellos plucking above it; the violin makes a few last restless excursions, and the concerto closes quietly, far from where it began.

Erich Wolfgang Korngold

1897–1957

Sinfonietta in B major, Op. 5

43 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Erich Wolfgang Korngold was fourteen when he began the *Sinfonietta*, in the spring of 1912, and had just turned fifteen when the sketch was finished that August. Orchestrating it took another year, during which he also wrote a violin sonata and started his first opera. By then he was already a known quantity in Vienna: the son of a prominent music critic, and the composer of a ballet, *Der Schneemann*, written when he was eleven.

Fließend, mit heiterem Schwunge (flowing, with cheerful swing). The motto rises at once and the first theme springs out of it, so the opening bars hold the material of the whole work. The second theme is slower and lilting, with a Viennese sway, and is built on the same fourths. A short development works up to a climax with brass fanfares; when the opening returns, the second theme is quieter than before, and the coda dwells on the five notes in a new harmonisation.

Scherzo: Molto agitato, rasch und feurig (fast and fiery). Brass and timpani launch it, with heavy accents and a restless main idea, and this is where the debt to Strauss is plainest. The middle section could hardly be more different: a slow, warm melody that drifts through one key after another. Listeners who know Korngold's film scores will recognise the manner. An abbreviated return of the scherzo ends the movement with hammered chords.

Molto andante (dreamy). The shortest movement. A cor anglais sings a wistful melody over hushed chords coloured by celesta and harps. The strings then take up the motto, slowed down and richly harmonised, the music rises to a single climax, and it sinks back to where it began.

Finale: Patetico, Allegro giocoso. The start is the darkest music in the piece: a stern gesture, then a slow, uneasy climb from the lower strings. The mood does not last. The same idea turns up in the Allegro giocoso as a cheerful main theme, and a broad, songlike second melody follows it. The movement grows from one climax to the next with the motto threaded through it, and the five rising notes close the work in triumph.

Tonight's artists

Anne-Sophie Mutter *violin*

The concerto was written for Mutter and is dedicated to her. She gave its first performance in Leipzig in 1995 and made the first recording, with the composer conducting. She plays it at all four concerts: the subscription pair on 17 and 18 April, the soirée on 23 April and the concert of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde on 24 April. Viotti and the orchestra take the Korngold Sinfonietta on tour between the two weekends with a different first half.

Anne-Sophie Mutter is a German violinist, born in Rheinfelden in Baden in 1963. She studied with Erna Honigberger and then with Aida Stucki, both pupils of Carl Flesch. Herbert von Karajan heard her at the Lucerne Festival in 1976, when she was thirteen, and invited her to play with the Berlin Philharmonic at the Salzburg Whitsun Festival the following year; her first recording, of two Mozart concertos with Karajan, followed in 1978. Alongside the central concerto repertoire she has made new music a large part of her work. Witold Lutosławski, Krzysztof Penderecki, Henri Dutilleux, Sofia Gubaidulina, Wolfgang Rihm, André Previn and John Williams are among the composers who have written for her. She has won four Grammy Awards and received the Ernst von Siemens Music Prize in 2008, the year in which she set up the Anne-Sophie Mutter Foundation to support young string players.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/wp-2027-04-17-viotti>

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