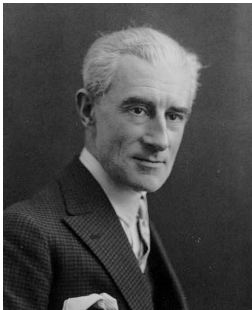


Program Notes

Wars have ravaged the world throughout history. They result in the loss of countless lives, innumerable injuries, and lasting effects on the human psyche, cultures, and future generations. Nations remember these sacrifices by paying tribute to heroes, fallen comrades, and those who made great sacrifices in the name of righteousness and justice. These tributes exist in many forms. They can be monuments, paintings, writings, stories handed down from one generation to another, and of course, music. Often the visceral depiction of battles in musical works paint an aural picture of war that brings listeners to the battlefield. However, works dedicated to the memory of those who fought can have an equally emotional impact.

Maurice Ravel originally wrote **Le Tombeau de Couperin** as a piano work in 1917, and dedicated each movement to the memory of a friend



Maurice Ravel

who died during World War I. His dedications are as follows: I. Prélude - First Lieutenant Jacques Charlot; II. Fugue - Second Lieutenant Jean Cruppi; III. Forlane - First Lieutenant Gabriel Deluc; IV. Rigaudon - Pierre and Paschal Gaudin; V. Menuet - Jean Dreyfus; VI. Toccata - Captain Joseph de Marliave. When he scored the work for orchestra in 1919, Ravel omitted the Fugue and Toccata.

A *tombeau* is a musical term meaning a piece written as a memoir. In addition to each of the movements having a dedication, the entire work was written as an homage to the French baroque keyboard suite. Interestingly, Ravel stated his intention was not necessarily to pay tribute to the composer and keyboardist François Couperin, after whom the piece is named, but the genre that he popularized. Ravel came up with his idea for the piece when he was serving during World War I.

Ravel was considered to be too small and delicate for military service, but unwilling to sit idly by, he realized he would be able to serve his country by composing. Later, when his brother Edouard enlisted, Ravel found himself able to serve as a nurse's aide. After his time in military hospitals, Ravel became a truck driver for the 13th Artillery Regiment (naming his truck Adélaïde, and signing letters Chauffeur Ravel). His health suffered due to the dangerous nature of the work, but his mind remained on composing. After his mother's death in early 1917, his mental and physical health rapidly declined, and he was discharged. After

recovering, he set to writing the piece that was initially intended to pay homage to France's golden age of keyboard music. Instead, it became a way to pay tribute to fallen comrades.

As someone who is considered to be one of the greatest orchestrators to have ever lived, translating the work from piano to full orchestra was likely a veritable joyride for Ravel. He handled the nuance, balance, instrumental color, and clarity with seemingly impossible finesse. Great care was obviously taken in this meticulous translation, as the work was deeply personal. Ravel even went to the extent of creating a cover for the piano work, in which he drew a draped funerary urn. This illustrates very well how the work doesn't focus on battles, but on the memories of those who lost their lives in battle.

Just as Ravel lost friends in World War I, Ludwig van Beethoven saw friends and those he admired fall during the Napoleonic wars in the early 1800s. One such acquaintance was Louis Ferdinand, Prince of Prussia. Prince Louis fought and was wounded in the French Revolutionary wars and was one of the primary advocates for resuming the war against Napoleon I in 1806, triggering the War of the Fourth Coalition. He was killed in combat at the beginning of the war, after refusing to surrender. He was well respected as a gifted musician, and his memory was preserved by Beethoven as well as Franz Liszt.



Ludwig van Beethoven

While Liszt wrote a piece in memory of Prince Louis, Beethoven wrote his **Piano Concerto No. 3** in honor of the Prussian prince between 1800 and 1803, out of his high regard for the prince's piano playing. Although his name is inscribed on the work, the prince was not Beethoven's only inspiration for the composition.

When Beethoven first traveled to the Austrian capital as a young student, it was believed by some that he would be Mozart's successor, but he made no mention of meeting Mozart in any letters, so it is uncertain if the two ever did. Beethoven moved to Vienna in 1792, nearly a year after Mozart's death. Mozart's music had a strong effect on the young Beethoven. The first pieces he published in Vienna were a series of variations on "Se vuol ballare" from *The Marriage of Figaro*, for violin and piano. He also played Mozart's piano concerto in D minor at a concert organized by Costanze, Mozart's widow.

Mozart's death had a profound impact on Beethoven. This is evident in more than just the key alone. The work as a whole, despite its dedication to Prince Louis, can be viewed as a tribute to Mozart.

Beethoven had Mozart's C minor Piano Concerto in mind while composing his own. Contemporaries of the two remarked at the resemblance of both C minor concerti. It was perhaps Mozart's death that led to the formulation of this work. Beethoven didn't have any real rivals at the time, at least in his mind, as he felt he would never be able to compose anything like Mozart did. (He acknowledged Schubert's existence, but when asked to name the greatest living composer other than himself, he had trouble coming up with an answer — though eventually he said Luigi Cherubini.)

Although he did emulate Mozart with this concerto, it is a unique example of how and why Beethoven was able to compose works that embellished the accepted styles and forms at the time. It directly reflects the advancements in piano technology, if you will. In the work, Beethoven makes use of the larger keyboard shortly after the piano's entrance. As the piano developed into its present day form, Beethoven especially took advantage of the larger dynamic range in solo writing as well as his use of heavier orchestrations.

When the piece premiered, Beethoven had not finished writing the piano part. This was not a problem, though, as he was the soloist, and improvisation was the norm at the time, but mostly due to the fact that he had the music committed to memory, just not committed to ink and paper. This proved a harrowing experience for Ignaz von Seyfried, the conductor of the Theater an der Wien, who turned pages at the premiere. Seyfried stated that Beethoven seemed to find great amusement in the experience, even if the many blank pages caused great anxiety for the page turner. Unfortunately, though, the initial reception of the piece was tepid at best.

Beethoven had yet to learn what Mozart seemed to inherently know: Do not give the audience too much too quickly. The piano exposition restates all of the major ideas that the orchestra just played, but Beethoven's own unique treatment of form quickly becomes evident. In the orchestra's exposition, C minor gives way to E-flat major in a way that may seem too soon, as the key then reverts back to the tonic. While it appears the orchestra will rest in C minor for too long, the piano enters again, restating what was just played, but makes the modulation more definitive with a new motif. This staccato, or even a knocking rhythm, grows in intensity through the development section, but he omits this motif in the recapitulation and the cadenza. In a nod to Mozart's C minor piano concerto, Beethoven allows the soloist to play through the end of the movement.

The second movement is written in E Major, which may not have

been a typical choice at the time. Though simple in form, it does contain lavish detail. Despite E Major seeming a distant choice (in relation to the key signature of C minor), just as the movement ends, Beethoven cleverly reinterprets a G-sharp as an A-flat, allowing for an easy transition back into C minor. The exact opposite pivot occurs when the piano enters, and we are briefly taken back into E Major, but then the key uses the same gesture to return to the original C minor. With one last surprise, Beethoven changes the meter of the coda, bringing the piece to an unexpected, but no less virtuosic conclusion.

In the same way that Beethoven worked to expand both forms and orchestrations to set his music apart from his predecessors, Jean Sibelius sought to establish Finland's voice through music. Through much of Sibelius's formative years, Swedish culture dominated the country, as it was under Russian occupation. His love of nature and inspiration taken from Finnish folklore are evident in nearly all of his works. After aligning himself with the Finnish nationalists, his compositions took on a strong role as the country's musical voice. On the heels of his successful premiere of *Finlandia*, Baron Axel Carpelan, who named the work, wrote to Sibelius, urging him to travel and continue composing Finnish music.

Sibelius's **Symphony No. 2** was composed chiefly in the sun-drenched seaside town of Rapallo, Italy, from 1901-1902. There is considerable debate over the meaning of this work. Sibelius himself described it as a "struggle between death and salvation" and a "confession of the soul," but others cited its strong national character with one critic dubbing it "The Symphony of Independence." One Finnish conductor felt the symphony had a political program and implications. The first movement depicts Finnish pastoral life, followed by the second reflecting the brutality of foreign rule, the third movement a crushing of patriotic spirit, and the fourth movement reflects the glorious hope for deliverance from tyranny. Sibelius, however, denied such political connotations. The composer originally intended the symphony to be a four movement tone poem based on the legend of Don Juan, and then later changed the source material to Dante's *Divine Comedy*.



Jean Sibelius

The symphony is composed in traditional form with four movements, each in sonata form, except for the third movement, which is a scherzo. The first movement is built upon an opening three-note motif, which suggests native folk music and exemplifies a fluid sense of rhythm. It

is also heard in various guises throughout the movements and forms the dramatic theme of the finale, thus providing a framework for the whole symphony. Another first movement theme typifies the Sibelian contrast between extremely long and short notes — a long note followed by a trill of sorts and then a descending fifth. The long notes act as pedal points, which produce tension and slow the harmonic rhythm to intensify climaxes. The mysterious second movement begins with a brooding pizzicato theme on cellos and basses. In early sketches, a motif that depicts an encounter between Don Juan and Death appears in this movement. Death is heard as the first main theme played by the bassoon. The scherzo is linked directly to the finale and oscillates between a frenzied fast section and a lyrical pastorello. The rising three note motif builds a highly effective bridge connecting the scherzo to the finale. In the final climax, the trumpets take up the familiar three note motif for the last time and cast a decisive fourth note that is triumphant.