

applied particularly to the grand Symphony in D, which is always a favorite in Prague, although it has no doubt been heard a hundred times."

Such connections have led to the general assumption by Mozart's biographers that the "Prague" symphony was composed for his visit there, but this cannot be the case -- Mozart composed the work before he received the invitation to visit the city. Indeed, a letter of his father's (November 17, 1786) clearly shows that at the time of composition Mozart was planning a visit to England, a visit which never took place because Leopold refused to look after the composer's two young children. It therefore seems perfectly reasonable to suggest that the work was composed with Mozart's projected London visit in mind -- what we know as the "Prague" symphony might have become Mozart's "London" symphony had his plans come to fruition. An unusual feature of the symphony is that it is in only three movements; it is the only major symphonic work from the Classical period to lack the usual minuet and trio or scherzo movement. But there is nothing small-scale about the work; it amply justifies Niemetschek's epithet "grand." The opening movement, a broad, imposing Adagio introduction followed by a hugely powerful Allegro, is one of the most impressive of all Classical symphonic movements, with dramatic qualities that foreshadow Don Giovanni and a mastery of counterpoint hitherto restricted to Mozart's chamber works. The central Andante utterly transcends the easygoing implication of such a heading; it is a movement of profound, songful depth and contrapuntal skill. The final Presto also shares some of the demonic power of Don Giovanni, the opera Mozart would shortly compose for Prague, while at the same time inhabiting a world in which, for all the bright major-mode music, tragedy never seems too far away.



MOZART SYMPHONY N° 32

in G major (K. 318)

SYMPHONY N° 38

in D major "Prague" (K. 504)

Peter Maag conducting
The London Symphony Orchestra



Symphony No. 32 in G major, K. 318

This short symphony was the first Mozart wrote after his return to Salzburg after his disastrous trip to Paris, during which his mother died and his only major output was the Symphony No. 31 "Paris". Because the Symphony No. 32 is in the form of an opera or operetta overture, some commentators have concluded that it was written as the "sinfonia," or overture for one of the stage pieces that Mozart was working on during 1779, such as Thamos, King of Egypt, K. 345/336a or Zaide, K. 334/336b. Ludwig Ritter von Köchel, editor of the Thematic Catalogue of Mozart's Work (1862) appended the subtitle ("Overture"). But Köchel was probably reflecting nineteenth century views, which considered overtures a separate type of composition from a symphony, whereas in Mozart's time there was little distinction between the two. Some commentators conclude that of Zaide and Thamos, one was too early and the other too late for this composition to be connected to it. The symphony is for strings, pairs of flutes, oboes, and bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, and kettledrums. It is Mozart's only symphony in G that calls for trumpets. It does not have a continuo part: the bassoons, cellos, and at times the double basses have independent parts. The first movement is in sonata-allegro form, but it stops short with a full-orchestra pause just where the main material should come in for a recapitulation. At that point the Andante starts, in a rondo form of ABA'CA"B'. (The apostrophes indicate that the recurring sections are varied.) This, too, does not come to a conclusion; note that a final repeat of the "A" material is missing. Now Mozart returns to the opening tempo and finally opens the recapitulation, but actually begins six measures before the return of the second

subject. Having gotten through the foreshortened recapitulation, the symphony would naturally end with a coda; the surprise here is that the coda is the opening subject that was "missing" from the recapitulation. The symphony is quite brief, being in a compact, continuous style, but it is very inventive in form and highly attractive in its ideas.

Symphony No. 38 in D major ("Prague"), K. 504

On May 1, 1786, Mozart's new opera *Le nozze di Figaro* received its first performance at the Burgtheater in Vienna. Enthusiastically received by connoisseurs, the long and complex opera puzzled many of the general public and it received only eight performances. Early in December, *Figaro* was staged at the National Theater (today known as the Tyl Theater) in Prague, where it became such a triumphant success that Mozart was induced to visit the Bohemian capital to see the production for himself. When he and his wife Constanze arrived on January 11, 1787, he had with him a new symphony which had been completed early in December (it was entered in Mozart's thematic catalog on December 6). The symphony was included in the concert Mozart gave eight days later, resulting in the first performance of a work which would subsequently become irrevocably associated with the city in which the composer witnessed his greatest triumph in later years. A decade after the concert, the Prague schoolmaster Franz Niemetschek (who educated Mozart's son Carl after the composer's death in 1791) testified to the symphony's enduring popularity: "The symphonies he composed for this occasion are real masterpieces of instrumental composition....This

Mozart

Symphony No. 32 In G Major, K.318 9:43

Symphony No. 38 In D Major, K.504 (The Prague)

Peter Maag / The London Symphony Orchestra

1 Symphony No. 32 In G Major, K.318 9:43

Symphony No. 38 In D Major, K.504 (The Prague)

2 Adagio-Allegro 13:38

3 Andante 14:43

4 Finale-Presto 5:21

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Producer: Erik Smith Engineer: Kenneth Wilkinson



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