

Arabella
Steinbacher

Max Bruch - Violin Concerto in G minor
Erich Wolfgang Korngold - Violin Concerto in D
Ernest Chausson - Poème

Orquestra Gulbenkian
Lawrence Foster

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957)

Violin Concerto in D, Op. 35		
1	Moderato nobile	9. 59
2	Romance – Andante	9. 18
3	Finale – Allegro assai vivace	7. 49

Ernest Chausson (1855-1899)

Poème for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 25		
4	Lento e misterioso – Animato – Allegro	16. 37

Max Bruch (1838-1920)

Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Op. 26		
5	Vorspiel. Allegretto moderato	8. 47
6	Adagio	9. 34
7	Finale. Allegro energico	7. 57

Arabella Steinbacher, Violin
Orquestra Gulbenkian

Gulbenkian Orchestra Lisbon, Concertmaster: David Lefèvre
Conducted by **Lawrence Foster**

Total playing time: 70.23

Recording venue: Grande Auditório of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lisbon, July 2012
Executive Producer: Job Maarse
Recording Producer: Job Maarse
Balance Engineer: Erdo Groot
Editing: lentje Mooij

Ms. Steinbacher currently plays the “Booth” Stradivari (1716) generously provided by the Nippon Music Foundation.

Max Bruch:
Violin Concerto No. 1

In part, Max Bruch lived in the wrong era. When the composer died in 1920 at the age of 82, Donald Tovey even remarked that “the news came to many as a surprise that he had lived so long.” And yet Bruch’s career had started out so well. He was only 14 years old when one of his symphonies was performed in Cologne, and the *Rheinische Musik Zeitung* devoted an entire article to him. After that Bruch quickly gained a reputation at home and abroad with his operas, oratorios, and cantatas. In 1882, Hugo Riemann even ranked him above Johannes Brahms in the first edition of his authoritative music lexicon. However, it is significant that only five years later, Riemann – despite describing Bruch as “one of our most important composers in the field of choral composition” – no longer allotted him a place among the “immortals”. In a rapidly changing music scene, in which Liszt, Wagner, Strauss, Mahler, and later Schoenberg provided new impulses, Bruch continued to write in a “traditional” style, characterized by a rich melody with clear, classical structuring. Recalcitrant and proud as he was, Bruch had already taken a stand back in the 1860s against the “Zukunftler” (= composers of the future), to whom he was wont to refer playfully as “Kuhzüftler”. Among others, he spoke of the great “Kunstschweinestall” (= art pig-sty) of Hugo Wolf and Richard Strauss, and the “gruesome products of Herr R. Strauss, Herr Reger and associates”. And if we are to believe a statement in a letter to his publisher Simrock, Bruch considered himself one of the few “who, together with Brahms, now still perpetuate music in accordance with its true, organic nature.”

Thanks to this kind of statement, Bruch did not make many friends, and thus it is not surprising that much of his music was considered anachronistic, and quickly forgotten. Except, of course, his Violin Concerto No. 1, which is one of the most frequently performed and much-loved works in the violin literature. Bruch himself was not at all happy with the popularity of his concerto. In 1887, he wrote: “Nothing equals the lethargy, stupidity, and apathy of many a German violinist. One of them turns up every fortnight, wanting to perform the Concerto No. 1 for me. I have become rude, and just say to them: ‘I cannot listen to this concerto any more, did I not write anything but this concerto? Why don’t you go away and for once play the other concertos, which are at least as good, if not better!’” And in an ironic mood, he even issued an “ordinance” against the concerto as, in his opinion, the violins could play the work by themselves.

It was not a foregone conclusion that Bruch’s first *concertante* work would turn out to be a violin concerto. After all, the piano was his instrument, not the violin. He began work on the concerto in 1864, but was

not sure about the shape and structure, and the technical performance details. In later life he wrote as follows: “From 1864-1868, I must have turned my concerto inside out at least half a dozen times, and conferred with x number of violinists before it finally ended up in the form in which it is now well known and played everywhere”. The person who exerted the greatest influence on the work was the famous Hungarian violinist Joseph Joachim, who was later also to advise Brahms in the composition of his own Violin Concerto. Bruch dedicated the concerto to Joachim.

Yet not Joachim, but Otto von KönigsLöw was the soloist at the first performance on April 24 in Koblenz, where Bruch held the position of “Städtischer Musikdirektor” (= city music director). Joachim performed the work for the first time in its revised version on January 7, 1868 in Bremen.

The success of his Violin Concerto would have guaranteed Bruch a considerable financial basis for the rest of his life, had he not unfortunately sold the work for only 250 Thaler to a publisher: thus, he missed out on all the royalties. When he later tried to sell the manuscript, he was again unlucky, and was forced to stand back and see it disappear to the United States.

Ernest Chausson: Poème

Just as Joseph Joachim provided a significant contribution to the creation of Bruch’s Violin Concerto No. 1, Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe was the driving force behind Ernest Chausson’s *Poème*. In 1896, Ysaÿe asked Chausson to write him a violin concerto. However, the composer did not feel up to this task. He replied as follows: “I hardly know where to begin with a concerto, which is a huge undertaking, the devil’s own task. But I can cope with a shorter work. It will be in extremely free form, containing several passages in which the violin plays by itself”. This statement would seem to indicate that Chausson already had the structure of the work – later to be called *Poème* – in his head. And this statement is in fact supported by a journal entry dating from July 1892, in which Chausson writes that he has rehearsed the melody of *L’amour triomphant* with violinist Mathieu Crickboom. The title given to the work he completed on June 29, 1896 was *Le chant de l’amour triomphant*. Later he changed this to the more abstract title *Poème symphonique*, and finally to *Poème*.

The original title of the work is interesting, since it offers a glimpse into the literary background of the work. Chausson was a great lover of Russian literature, and especially of the works of Lev Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky and Ivan Turgenev, with whom he was befriended. In 1881, Turgenev had completed his novella *Le chant de l’amour triomphant*. During his youth, Turgenev had fallen in love with the famous mezzo-

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soprano Pauline Viardot. However, in 1840 she married the writer and theatre director Louis Viardot. Yet Turgenev's passion for Pauline did not diminish, and he remained in her environment for the rest of his life, even dwelling for some time on the Viardot estate. And the unhappy love story was to repeat itself. Viardot's daughter, Marianne, was engaged for some time to composer Gabriel Fauré, but broke off the engagement and later married his colleague Alphonse Duvernoy. It appears that Turgenev processed these love stories in his novella *Le chant de l'amour triomphant* and that the Poème was based on this novella.

Turgenev's story revolves around a painter, Fabio, and a musician, Muzzio, who both love the same girl, Valeria. She chooses Fabio and marries him, after which Muzzio travels to the Far East. When he returns, he brings back a magical violin with a snake-skin pattern. Valeria is now happily married to Fabio, although the marriage has not yet been blessed with children. One evening, Muzzio plays a melody entitled *Le chant de l'amour triomphant*, which casts a spell on Valeria. As if hypnotized, she sleepwalks into the garden. But she is followed by her jealous husband who stabs Muzzio. After this, life seems to follow its normal course again, until one day when Valeria is playing the organ. The melody is that of *Le chant de l'amour triomphant*. And while she is playing, she suddenly feels life kicking in her belly. "Could it be possible?" Valeria asks himself.

Musicologists have endeavoured to link the musical course of *Poème* to the events in Turgenev's story. But the changes in the title of the work make it seem likely that Chausson did not consider the programmatic background to be important to the listener. In that spirit, Claude Debussy – who was also a friend of Chausson's – also commented on the work: "The freedom of its form never goes against its harmonious proportion. The sense of dreamy gentleness is at its most touching at the end when, leaving aside all trace of description and anecdote, the music becomes that very feeling which inspires its emotion. Such moments in the work of an artist are highly rare."

Chausson completed no less than three different versions of *Poème*: one for violin and piano; one for violin, piano and string quartet (written as a complementary work to his concerto for the same selection of instruments); and a version for violin and orchestra. Eugène Ysaÿe first tried out the version for violin and piano in the fall of 1896 during a private concert, at which the Spanish composer Isaac Albéniz was probably also present. The latter then sent the score to the publisher Breitkopf & Härtel, but they did not believe it would be successful. Finally, Albéniz himself paid for the publication of the work, and had the sum of 300 marks transferred to Chausson, under the pretext of "royalties". It was Albéniz' way of thanking his colleague for the support he had received at the outset of his career.

Erich Wolfgang Korngold: Violin Concerto

"Vom Genie zum Talent" (= from genius to talent). This phrase is often associated with the composer Erich Wolfgang Korngold. After having been enthusiastically received as a child prodigy, it was increasingly difficult later on for the composer to meet the expectations of the rapidly changing world of music. "Fifty is old for a child prodigy," he wrote. As did Bruch, Korngold held fast to his own musical idiom, which he had developed early on in his career, and he was not prepared to make any concessions.

Two years before his death in 1955, the music publicist Karl Schumann visited the composer. He wrote: "Korngold looked exactly like the few photographs in circulation: small, roundish, and pale. He seemed to belong to another era with his obligatory bow-tie, his old-fashioned courtesy, and his broad Viennese accent. The years he had lived in the United States did not seem to have rubbed off at all. Whenever he talked to you, it felt like regressing 30 years in time. He looked shockingly tired, a man who had lived through the trauma of emigration and the mills of the movie studios. You could see the effects of the heart disease from which he suffered, both the physical and the psychological. In the end, his death was due not only to the decades of overwork, but also to a broken heart that never recovered from being expelled from Vienna, from the good old days, from the atmosphere of the *fin de siècle*, Jugendstil, symbolism, the cult of music, opera, and the coffee-house."

The young Korngold had been one of the greatest young talents in the Viennese world of music. The eight-year-old son of the influential critic Julius Korngold made such an impression on Gustav Mahler that he sent him to study with Alexander von Zemlinsky. Yet if we are to believe Mahler's wife, Alma, this was on her advice. "During the period of my marriage to Gustav Mahler, he came to me and said that Korngold had just asked him for a brilliant teacher for his brilliant son. Mahler was very eccentric and did not know much of the world outside, except for matters concerning the opera. I immediately replied: 'The only possible candidate is Zemlinsky, there can be no other choice.' Thus Mahler recommended Zemlinsky, and Erich Korngold had no cause to regret it." Soon the boy left his teacher way behind. In 1910, his ballet *Der Schneemann* (= the snowman) was performed at the Vienna Hofoper. One of the newspapers in Vienna printed the headline: "A master has descended from the heavens", and everyone was talking about the child prodigy, "young Korngold".

But World War II quickly put an end to this. The rise of National Socialism and the growing anti-Semitism in Austria made life increas-

ingly difficult for Korngold. First, his work as teacher and conductor was curtailed, and after his publisher Schott began increasingly to distance himself from the Jewish composer, Korngold realized that he no longer had a future in Austria. Finally, director Max Reinhardt – with whom he had produced a new version of Johann Strauss' *Die Fledermaus* in 1929 – gave him a helping hand and brought him over to Hollywood in 1934 to arrange Mendelssohn's music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for a new film featuring Mickey Rooney, James Cagney, Dick Powell, and the young Olivia de Havilland. For a period of six to eight weeks: the project would not take any longer, according to Reinhardt. But due to all the setbacks, it took almost six months in the end. Thanks to the success of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Korngold received new contracts from Paramount and Warner Bros., and in 1935, during a second visit to Hollywood, he composed the soundtrack for *Captain Blood*: the film that was to launch Errol Flynn's career. A year later, Korngold won his first Oscar with *Anthony Adverse*.

Now the composer was caught between two worlds. On the one hand, he had quickly become the most popular film composer in Hollywood; on the other hand, he had his career as an opera composer in Europe. However, the choice between the two genres was made for him when the Nazis took over in Austria in 1938. Korngold fled with his family to the United States and began, as he himself put it, a "third career": after "young Korngold" and the celebrated composer of operas, he was now Korngold, the film composer. He swore that as long as Hitler was in power, he would never write an opera or an orchestral work.

In a sense, Korngold the film composer utilized everything he had learned as a composer of symphonic and operatic music. But he was not happy, and after the war he found himself once again at a crossroads. "I look back over my life, and I see three phases," Korngold wrote. "First of all, the child prodigy, then the opera composer in Europe, and now the film composer. I believe that I must now take a clear decision, if I do not intend to spend the rest of my life as a Hollywood musician." Thus he decided in future to apply himself once again to "serious" music, and the result was a stream of works for the concert hall.

At the insistence of the great violinist Bronislaw Huberman, Korngold started writing his Violin Concerto. The work progressed slowly, however, and was not completed until 1945. And just as he had allowed the style of the Viennese fin-de-siècle to exert a major influence on his film scores, Korngold now drew on his film music as a basis for new symphonic works. The Violin Concerto is largely based on themes from various movies. The first movement opens with a theme from *Another Dawn* (1937), where it served as the "love theme" in a scene with Errol Flynn and Kay Francis. The second theme is from *Juarez* (1939) featuring Bette Davis.

The clarinet solo introducing the second movement, Romance, is a quote from *Anthony Adverse* (1936); and, finally, the last movement is based on the main theme from *The Prince and the Pauper* (1937). None of these quotes is directly linked to the dramatic situation in the corresponding film. Korngold did not employ his quotes as extra-musical references, as did Mahler, for example. It would appear that he used the musical material solely because of its, as yet, unexplored possibilities.

The Violin Concerto was dedicated to Alma Mahler-Werfel; a fitting tribute to the woman who had given his career a major push, and who continued to support him loyally in the United States. Alma Mahler wrote the following in her memoirs: "There is Erich Korngold primarily, with his beautiful wife. When he sits at the piano, he absolutely delights us. What will remain of him in years to come, I cannot say, but he is in any case a musician of genius, at least, truly ingenious."

The Violin Concerto was first performed by Jascha Heifetz on February 15, 1947 in St. Louis, where it was received with a thundering ovation. The composer was also delighted: "In spite of the demand for virtuosity in the finale, the work with its many melodic and lyric episodes was contemplated for a Caruso, rather than for a Paganini. It is needless to say how delighted I am to have my concerto performed by Caruso and Paganini in one person: Jascha Heifetz."

However, on the East Coast, the critics were less enthusiastic. Here, they wrote about "old-fashioned, late-Romantic idiom," that came off badly in comparison with the atonality of Schoenberg, or the innovations of a composer such as Igor Stravinsky. Irving Kolodin spoke disparagingly of "more corn than gold". And unfortunately, Korngold's later orchestral works, including the Cello Concerto, the Symphony (in which he also used themes from his film music), and the Symphonic Serenade suffered greatly from the spirit of the age. Only the Violin Concerto has remained in the concert repertoire, thanks mainly to the efforts of various great violin virtuosos, headed by Heifetz.

Ronald Vermeulen

English translation: Fiona J. Stroker-Gale

Arabella Steinbacher

Violinist Arabella Steinbacher, a native of Munich, has firmly established herself as one of today's leading violinists on the international concert scene, performing with the world's major orchestras. The New York Times reports that she plays with, "Balanced lyricism and fire - among her assets are a finely polished technique and a beautifully varied palette of timbres." After her debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, performing the Sibelius Violin Concerto under Christoph von Dohnányi, The Chicago Tribune reported, "From her magical entry over hushed orchestral strings to the biting swagger she brought to the dancing finale, it was evident that her feeling for this music runs as deep as her technical command. The central Adagio came off especially beautifully, Steinbacher conveying its brooding melancholy with a rich vibrato, impeccable intonation and a remarkable breadth of phrasing." Ms. Steinbacher's career was launched in 2004 with an extraordinary and unexpected debut in Paris, when she stepped in on short notice for an ailing colleague and performed the Beethoven Violin Concerto with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France under Sir Neville Marriner. Her diverse and deep repertoire includes more than thirty concertos for violin. In addition to all of the major concertos of the Classical and Romantic period, she also performs those of Barber, Bartók, Berg, Glazunov, Khatchaturian, Milhaud, Prokofiev, Schnittke, Shostakovich, Stravinsky, Szymanowski, Hindemith, Hartmann, and Sofia Gubaidulina's Offertorium. Among Ms. Steinbacher's numerous recording honors are 2 ECHO-Klassik Awards (considered to be the German equivalent of the Grammy) "Les Chocs du Mois" from Le Monde de la Musique, and two German Record Critics Awards as well as the prestigious Editors Choice Award from Gramophone magazine. Ms. Steinbacher is recording exclusively for PentaTone Classics. Her first CD on that label, released in autumn 2009, included Dvorák's Violin Concerto in A Minor and Szymanowski's Violin Concerto No. 1, as well as Dvorák's Romance in F Minor, with the Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester Berlin led by Marek Janowski. Ms. Steinbacher recorded her second PentaTone release, which features Bartók's First and Second Violin Concertos, in July 2009. The CD was released in October 2010. Arabella Steinbacher is appearing with the leading international orchestras including the London Symphony Orchestra, Dresden Staatskapelle, London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, NDR Sinfonieorchester Hamburg, WDR Symphony Orchestra, and NHK Symphony Orchestra; she has worked with the world's leading conductors including Riccardo Chailly, Sir Colin Davis, Christoph von Dohnányi, Charles Dutoit, Herbert

Blomstedt, Marek Janowski, Lorin Maazel, Sir Neville Marriner and Yannick Nezet-Seguin, among others. Highlights of the 2010-11 season include Ms. Steinbacher's Carnegie Hall debut with the conductor-less Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and her subscription debut with both the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra as well as her debut at Maggio Musicale in Florence under Zubin Mehta and her debut with the Israel Philharmonic. During the 2009-10 season, Arabella Steinbacher made her much-anticipated debut at the BBC Proms at Royal Albert Hall with the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra led by Jonathan Nott. She also debuted with the London Symphony Orchestra under Sir Colin Davis, performed with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra under Riccardo Chailly, toured with the Philharmonia Orchestra under Lorin Maazel, performed with the Bayerischer Rundfunk Orchester led by Sir Colin Davis and in the US and Asia with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Charles Dutoit. Born in Munich in 1981 to a German father and a Japanese mother, Ms. Steinbacher began studying the violin at the age of three. Her mother is a professionally trained singer who came to Germany from Japan to study music, and her father was the first Solorepetitor in the Bayerische Staatsoper, from 1960 to 1972. At nine, she became the youngest violin student of Ana Chumachenko at the Munich Academy of Music. She received further musical inspiration and guidance from Ivry Gitlis. In 2001, Ms. Steinbacher won the sponsorship prize of the Free State of Bavaria and in the same year she was awarded a scholarship by the Anne-Sophie Mutter Foundation. Ms. Steinbacher currently plays the "Booth" Stradivari (1716) generously provided by the Nippon Music Foundation. She lives in her hometown of Munich, and her general manager is Tanja Dorn at IMG Artists.

<http://www.arabella-steinbacher.com/>

Lawrence Foster

Lawrence Foster has been Music Director of the Gulbenkian Orchestra in Lisbon since 2002.

Highlights with this orchestra to date have included Beethoven Piano Concerto cycles with Evgeny Kissin in Madrid, Munich and Berlin in 2005; a project with Hélène Grimaud in 2006 in Paris, Amsterdam and Madrid and German tours with Arcadi Volodos and Lang Lang in 2007.

Starting from the 2009/10 season he will also become Music Director of the Orchestre et Opéra National de Montpellier. Other Music Directorships have been with the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra, the Aspen Music Festival and School, the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, the Houston Symphony Orchestra, the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra and the Philharmonic Orchestra of Monte-Carlo.

Lawrence Foster is a prolific guest conductor. His engagements include the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, the Orchestre Nationale de Lyon, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, the Vienna Symphony, the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra Amsterdam and the NDR Radio Orchestra Hamburg.

He is also a passionate opera conductor conducting in major houses throughout the world including the New York Metropolitan Opera, the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, the Bastille in Paris and the Deutsche Oper Berlin.

Born in Los Angeles to Romanian parents, Lawrence Foster has been a major champion of the music of Georg Enescu. He served as Artistic Director of the Georg Enescu Festival and his discography includes a recording of Enescu's "Oedipe" - featuring José van Dam and Barbara Hendricks – awarded the prestigious "Grand Prix du Disque" from the Académie Charles Cros. In 2005, to celebrate the Enescu anniversary, a boxed set of works by Enescu, recorded by Lawrence Foster with the orchestras of Monte-Carlo and Lyon, was released.

In 2003 Mr. Foster was decorated by the Romanian President for services to Romanian music.

