

NAXOS

BRUCH

Violin Concerto No. 1
Konzertstück • Romance

Maxim Fedotov, Violin
Russian Philharmonic Orchestra
Dmitry Yablonsky



Max Bruch (1838-1920)

Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 26 • Konzertstück, Op. 84 • Romance, Op. 42

Today Max Bruch is generally known only as the composer of works for the violin. In addition to the *Violin Concerto in G minor*, the popularity of which continues, and, to the annoyance of the composer, eventually overshadowed much of his other work, we hear from time to time the *Scottish Fantasy* and the *Second Violin Concerto*. The fact that Bruch, in his day, was famous for his large-scale choral works is forgotten. Between 1870 and 1900 there were numerous performances of works such as *Odysseus*, *Frithjof* or *Das Lied von der Glocke*, earning for the composer a reputation that momentarily outshone that of Brahms.

Max Bruch was born in Cologne on 6th January, 1838, in the same year as Bizet. He studied there with Ferdinand Hiller and Carl Reinecke. Extended journeys at home and abroad as a student were followed by a longer stay in Mannheim, where his opera *Loreley* was performed in 1863, a work based on a libretto by Geibel and originally dedicated to Mendelssohn, which brought him to the attention of a wider public. Bruch's first official appointments were as Kapellmeister, first in Koblenz from 1865 to 1867, and then in Sondershausen until 1870, followed by a longer stay in Berlin and a period from 1873 to 1878 in Bonn, when he dedicated himself to composition. After a short time as director of the Sternscher Sangverein in Berlin, in 1880 he was appointed conductor of the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, where he succeeded Julius Benedict, leaving England in 1883 to become director of the Orchester-verein in Breslau. In 1891 he moved finally to Berlin and took over master-classes in composition, Respighi being one of his pupils. He retired in 1911 to devote himself to composition, although now essentially writing in a traditional style that seemed to have passed. He died in Berlin on 2nd October, 1920.

The famous *Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor*, Op. 26, caused Bruch considerable trouble. In 1865 he had taken up his first official position as conductor in

Koblenz and by then he had already determined to tackle a form that was new to him as a composer, the concerto, embarking on the projected violin concerto in the summer of 1864. In the event Joseph Joachim gave the first performance of the work in its final and definitive form in January 1868 in Bremen, with further performances in other cities. It was soon adopted by other violinists, including Leopold Auer, and Ferdinand David in Leipzig. Bruch had sought the advice of Joachim on the composition, and in particular on the solo writing for the violin, and advice, not all of it acceptable, had come from Ferdinand David and from the conductor Hermann Levi. In later years Bruch was anxious that the importance of such advice should not be exaggerated. He sold the concerto to the publisher August Cranz for 250 thalers, thus losing the possibility of royalties, a matter of obvious later regret.

The concerto is unusual in form. With three movements, all largely in sonata-form, it opens with a *Vorspiel* (Prelude), the soloist entering in the sixth bar with a flourish. There is a lyrical second subject and an opportunity for technical display at the heart of the movement, before a shortened recapitulation, with a return to the music of the opening and a brief *Allegro moderato* that forms a link to the E flat major *Adagio*. There the soloist immediately announces the principal theme and, after an elaborate transition, the second, already heard earlier in the movement. Both return in the concluding section. There is a Hungarian lilt to the principal theme of the final G major *Allegro energico*, and a suggestion of the similar figuration Brahms was to use in his own violin concerto ten years later, both perhaps reflecting the influence of the Hungarian-born Joachim, to whom Bruch's work was dedicated.

The *Konzertstück*, Op. 84, was written many years later and completed in 1910. Bruch had taken the advice of Joachim's former pupil, Willy Hess, who had recently taken up a position at the Berlin Musikhoch-

schule, on the lay-out of the violin part. The work seemed originally to have been intended as a fourth violin concerto, but with only two movements, linked like the first two movements of the first concerto and, indeed, like Mendelssohn's *Violin Concerto in E minor*, a discernible influence on the earlier work, the title *Concert Piece* seemed preferable. It was dedicated to Hess.

The F sharp minor first movement, marked *Allegro appassionato*, starts with an extended orchestral exposition, opening dramatically with a theme that is to form the substance of the solo entry. The soloist leads, through demanding transitional material, to a deeply felt A minor second subject, thematic material that is to return after the display of the central development. There is a passage of greater tranquillity that forms a link with the following *Adagio, ma non troppo lento*, in the key of G flat major, the enharmonic equivalent of F sharp major. Here the soloist offers the principal theme, that of an Irish folk-song, *The Little Red Lark*. It is this that forms the principal thematic substance of the movement, finally bringing it to a gentle conclusion.

Maxim Fedotov

The violinist Maxim Fedotov is a People's Artist of Russia, soloist of the Moscow State Academic Philharmonic Society, and laureate of many international competitions including the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow and the Tokyo International Competition. Acclaimed by the press as a 'Russian Paganini', he performs all the main violin repertoire, and has appeared in the principal concert halls of Russia, and in Milan, at the Salzburg Mozarteum, in Madrid, Leipzig, Berlin, and Vienna, as well as in Japan and elsewhere. He has performed with all the major orchestras of Russia, Europe and Japan, and has a repertoire of more than fifty concertos. From 1998 to 2001 he served as a Professor of the Moscow State Conservatory and since 2002 has been President of the Association of Laureates of the International Tchaikovsky competition. In 2003 he became professor and head of the violin and viola section of the Russian Music Academy. He has served as a jury member for various international violin competitions, and has given master-classes in Germany, Spain, Japan, Croatia, Australia and elsewhere. Maxim Fedotov was the first violinist to give a recital on both the violins left by Paganini.

By 1874 Bruch had completed the first movement of a projected second violin concerto. In the event he decided to leave it as a separate work of one movement, and the actual second violin concerto was first heard in 1877 when Pablo Sarasate played it in London, while the third, expanded from an original single movement, was completed in 1891. As earlier, Bruch had taken advice from Joachim on the violin writing, and from Robert Heckmann, to whom the work was dedicated.

The *Romance in A minor, Op. 42*, is introduced by wind chords and the solemn notes of a solo horn, before the entry of the soloist *Mit einfachem Ausdruck* (With simple expression). The melody returns in a lower register before the orchestra leads the way to the F major second theme, proposed with double stopping by the soloist. Both themes are to return, the first calling now for violin octaves and the second in A major, with a conclusion marked by the gentle ascent of the solo violin into the heights.

Keith Anderson



Russian Philharmonic Orchestra

The Russian Philharmonic Orchestra is firmly rooted in Russia's rich musical traditions, and has achieved an impressive and outstanding musical quality by drawing its musicians from the highest ranks of Russia's most famous orchestras such as the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Russian National Orchestra and the State Symphony Orchestra. The Russian Philharmonic Orchestra was originally formed as a recording ensemble and has gone on to receive high acclaim also for its concert performances. In addition to regular recordings for leading international companies, the orchestra has also undertaken tours to Turkey, Austria, Germany, China, Taiwan, Finland and elsewhere. Dmitry Yablonsky was appointed Music Advisor to the orchestra in 2003.

Dmitry Yablonsky

Dmitry Yablonsky was born in 1962 into a musical family. His mother, Oxana Yablonskaya, is a highly regarded concert pianist, and his father is a principal oboist with the Moscow Radio and Television Orchestra. He entered the Central School of Music for Gifted Children in Moscow at the age of six, and at the age of nine made his orchestral debut with Haydn's *Cello Concerto in C major*. In 1977, he and his mother emigrated to the United States, where he studied at the Juilliard School of Music, the Curtis Institute, and Yale University. His principal cello teachers have been Isaak Buravsky, Stefan Kalianov, Aldo Parisot and Zara Nelsova. Dmitry Yablonsky has performed in many prestigious venues throughout the world, including La Scala, Milan, the Concertgebouw in the Netherlands, the Great Hall of Moscow Conservatory, and St Petersburg Philharmonic Hall, in addition to numerous appearances in the United States, including concerts at Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall. He has appeared in collaboration with major orchestras and conductors, and together with chamber music partners of distinction. His interest in conducting began at Yale, when he studied with Otto-Werner Müller and also with Yuri Simonov. He made his debut as a conductor in 1990 with the Santa Cecilia Orchestra of Rome. In 1999 he was named Principal Guest Conductor of the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, and has appeared as guest conductor with orchestras in Europe and in the Far East, and was for three years Principal Guest Conductor of the Moscow Symphony Orchestra. In 1998 he founded the summer Puigcerda Festival on the French-Spanish border, and in 2002 became Principal Conductor of the Russian Philharmonic Orchestra. His many recordings, both as a cellist and as a conductor, include a number of releases for Naxos and Marco Polo.



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With its memorable tunes and dazzling writing for the solo instrument, Bruch's *Violin Concerto No. 1* has been described as the "quintessential Romantic showpiece". A firm favourite with soloists and audiences alike, it is coupled on this disc with two less frequently heard works for solo violin and orchestra that were originally conceived as possible concertos.

Max
BRUCH
(1838-1920)

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| | Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Op. 26 | 25:21 |
| 1 | Vorspiel: Allegro moderato – | 8:36 |
| 2 | Adagio | 9:19 |
| 3 | Finale: Allegro energico | 7:26 |
| | Konzertstück, Op. 84 | 17:53 |
| 4 | Allegro appassionato – | 8:17 |
| 5 | Adagio, ma non troppo lento | 9:36 |
| 6 | Romance, Op. 42 | 10:13 |

Maxim Fedotov, Violin
Russian Philharmonic Orchestra • Dmitry Yablonsky

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