

NAXOS

Paul
WRANITZKY

(1756–1808)

Orchestral Works • 7

**Symphony in D major
'Con musica turca'**

Symphony in C major

Merkur, der Heiratsstifter

Die Rache

**Czech Chamber
Philharmonic
Orchestra Pardubice**

Marek Štilec



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Paul Wranitzky (Pavel Vranický) was born in the southern Moravian village of Neureisch (today Nová Říše, Czech Republic) where he received his first musical training at the local Premonstratensian monastery. After studies in Jihlava and Olomouc, he moved to Vienna in 1776 to study theology at the university, where he also became director of music at the theological seminary.

In 1783 he became music director to Count Johann Baptist Esterházy of Galantha, an amateur oboist and distant relative to Haydn's employer. Upon the count's recommendation, Wranitzky joined the Viennese Masonic Lodge Zur gekrönten Hoffnung, for which he composed songs as well as symphonies. The composer Joseph Martin Kraus (1756–1792) was a visiting member at the lodge in 1783. Kraus, an already established composer, recognised Wranitzky's budding compositional talent and provided encouragement and possibly some lessons. Several early publications also mention Wranitzky as a student of Haydn.

Wranitzky and Mozart became masonic brothers when three lodges merged in 1785. A concert given at the lodge on 15 December 1785 included two symphonies by Wranitzky, expressly written for the lodge, as well as a cantata, a piano concerto and improvisations by Mozart.

In 1785, Wranitzky became orchestra director at the Kärntnertortheater and two years later also at the Burgtheater. From the early 1790s until his death he would hold the position of first orchestra director for both court theatres.

Wranitzky's first stage work, *Oberon, König der Elfen*, was premiered by Schikaneder's troupe at the Theater auf der Wieden in 1789. Its success prompted Schikaneder to launch a series of fairy-tale operas, with Mozart's *The Magic Flute* from 1791 being the most well known today.

As secretary of the Tonkünstler-Societät from 1794 to 1807, Wranitzky revitalised the society, resolving a dispute regarding Haydn's membership application and welcoming the celebrated master into the society with a glowing speech. Haydn reciprocated by insisting that Wranitzky lead the orchestra in the society's profitable performances of *The Creation*. Wranitzky's high regard as an orchestra leader is further attested by Beethoven requesting Wranitzky to premiere his *First Symphony* in 1800.

The imperial court favoured Wranitzky with commissions. He became a favourite composer of the Empress Marie Therese (1772–1807), for whose private concerts he served as concertmaster and provided exclusive compositions.

After his sudden death in 1808 his musical legacy was quickly overshadowed by his colleagues and friends Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven. Only in recent years has his music again begun to garner the attention it clearly deserves.

Compared to his exact contemporaries Mozart and Kraus, Wranitzky began his serious compositional activities late in life. While a sizeable body of canons and part songs for male voices were probably produced during his student years, the first datable instrumental compositions are from the early 1780s when he was already in his mid-twenties. However, he quickly made up for lost time and became a very productive composer, notwithstanding his busy rehearsal and performance schedule at the theatres.

While Wranitzky composed in most genres, symphonies seem to have held a special position in his creative interest as he produced them continuously during his career. Today 45 symphonies survive, making him one of the most prolific composers of his day in the genre. During the second half of the 1790s, Wranitzky was the most important symphonist in Vienna. It is therefore not surprising that many features of Wranitzky's style are echoed in the early symphonies of Beethoven.

Symphony in D major 'Con musica turca' (1790s)

The *Symphony in D major*, subtitled 'Con musica turca', is one of several Wranitzky symphonies surviving solely in the music collection of Ferdinand III of Tuscany. During his exile in Vienna due to the Napoleonic wars, the Grand Duke frequently employed Wranitzky as a composer and performer.

A short and stately *Grave* introduction gives way to an energetic *Allegro spiritoso*. Defying the expected affirmation of the D major tonality, the opening theme in the strings begins with a series of modulations, delaying the arrival of the home key until the full orchestra eventually joins in *fortissimo*, dispelling any ambiguities. The fairly extended development section sets forth from this modulating material, advancing through a series of modulations into more distant keys.

In the ensuing *Capriccio*, Wranitzky presents a series of sections of contrasting characters, repeats the same material in another key sequence, and finally ties it all together in a uniting coda. The regal *Menuetto* of the third movement is complemented by a *Trio* scored for solo flute and strings alone.

The rousing *Finale* must have been a favourite piece at court, as Wranitzky used it for several works linked to the imperial family. The first contrasting episode of the *Rondo* features a solo flute, while the second introduces a piccolo and snare drum, evoking a militaristic atmosphere. In the third episode the promised Turkish instruments (triangle, cymbals, and Turkish drum) finally enters in Janissary style. After a final return of the principal theme, all instrumental forces unite for the jubilant coda.

Merkur, der Heiratsstifter (1793)

In two acts with a prologue, the singspiel *Merkur, der Heiratsstifter* ('Mercury the Matchmaker') premiered on 21 February 1793 at the Theater in der Leopoldstadt in Vienna. The libretto, adapted by the house dramatist Joachim Perinet (1763–1816), was based on an earlier singspiel titled *Der vergötterte Bernardon* ('The Deified Bernardon'), written in 1764 by Viennese comedy legend Johann Joseph Felix von Kurz (1717–1784, stage name Bernardon). The fairy-tale plot revolves around the god Mercury helping two love-struck couples overcome obstacles to marry. In a letter to his publisher André, Wranitzky expressed his misgivings about the nonsensical plot, but still penned an inspired musical score, which includes not one, but two attractive overtures.

A call on the post horn, a homage to the titular messenger of the gods, initiates the overture to the prologue. Adding a delightfully unexpected sonority to the bright and breezy movement, the post horn continues to punctuate and comment with calls and fanfares.

As the plot thickens, so does the complexity of the music. While remaining optimistically energetic, the overture to the first act presents a sonata-form movement in a markedly more intricate style than its companion.

Symphony in C major, Op. 35, No. 1 (pub. c. 1799)

The *Symphony in C major*, first in the set of three *Sinfonies à Grand Orchestre, Op. 35*, was published in or around 1799. It stands as a fine example of Wranitzky's mature orchestral style, characterised by assured orchestration with independent treatment of wind instruments. For the private concerts of Ferdinand III of Tuscany, Wranitzky augmented the orchestration with clarinets, which we have chosen to include in this recording.

After the pensive *Adagio* introduction, the *Presto* bursts into full force with a unison figure in the strings. Repeated quavers form the nucleus of rhythmic motifs which will develop and figure prominently throughout the movement, underpinned by the perpetuum mobile drive of unrelenting quavers.

The ensuing *Allegretto con moto* gracefully continues the clear rhythmic momentum established in the first movement. An elegant contradance set in rondo form, the movement maintains a noble character throughout, even as the winds and timpani frequently interject with a repeated hammering motif. The tunefully lilting *Menuetto* and its expansive *Trio* feature extensive woodwind solos, particularly highlighting the flute.

The *Finale*, a *Presto* set in rondo form, unfolds with unending good spirits and ceaseless energy. Extended passages showcase the winds alone, adding contrast to the orchestral texture. The two contrasting episodes serve as extended development sections focusing mainly on the opening motif of the principal theme. A brief coda rounds off yet another compelling finale by Wranitzky, who rarely disappoints in the genre.

Die Rache (1795)

The four-act tragedy *Die Rache*, a German-language adaption of *The Revenge* by Edward Young (1683–1765), premiered at the Burgtheater on 26 March 1795. The play revolves around Zanga, an enslaved Moorish prince driven by a thirst for vengeance against Don Alonzo, his master and captor, responsible for the murder of Zanga's father.

Wranitzky provided overtures for each act, with the bulk of them also forming the *Symphony in D minor 'La Tempesta'*, recorded on the second volume of this series (Naxos 8.574255). The remaining two pieces, a slow introduction to the first act and the second act overture, are combined here to create a highly satisfying unity.

The slow introduction, an affectionate *Andante con moto*, features lyrical writing in the strings before culminating in three *fortissimo* chords for the full orchestra. In the ensuing sonata-form movement, Wranitzky skilfully employs a selection of simple musical motifs. Unlike the dark fast movements of the *Tempesta* symphony, this *Allegro* brims with anticipation of great things to come. Like the first warm breeze of summer, it reveals Wranitzky at his sunniest.

Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice



Photo: Frantisek Renza

The Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice is valued for its stylistic interpretations and the extraordinary quality of its orchestral sound, and it is rightly ranked amongst the world's leading representatives of Czech musical culture. It often performs at the most prestigious festivals in the Czech Republic and venues throughout Europe such as the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, the Grosses Festspielhaus, Salzburg, the Herkulessaal and the Gasteig, Munich, the Musikverein, Vienna, the Brucknerhaus, Linz, and the Meistersingerhalle, Nuremberg among many others. Outside Europe the orchestra has performed in Japan and toured extensively around America. The first principal conductor, Libor Pešek, quickly raised the orchestra to a high standard, and subsequent principal conductors have included Marco Armiliato and Mariss Jansons. The orchestra has also welcomed numerous world-renowned soloists such as Isabelle van Keulen, Vladimir Spivakov, Ludwig Güttler, Radek Baborák, Gábor Boldoczki and Sergei Nakariakov. Aside from concerts, the orchestra regularly engages in operatic and theatre projects and has recorded dozens of successful albums on record labels including Naxos, ArcoDiva, Supraphon, Classico, Monitor-EMI and Amabile.

www.kfpar.cz

Marek Štilec



Photo: Antonín Bína

Czech conductor Marek Štilec is known as an interpreter of Classical orchestral repertoire and is a specialist in Czech Romantic and contemporary music. He has collaborated with orchestras the world over, including the New World Symphony, Ulster Orchestra, London Classical Soloists, Orchestra of the Swan, Berlin Camerata, Kammerphilharmonie Graz and Sinfonietta Bratislava. A prolific recording artist, he has made over 30 albums for labels including Naxos, ArcoDiva, cpo and Supraphon. In the field of historically informed performance Štilec has collaborated with ensembles including Czech Ensemble Baroque and Ensemble 18+. He is also the founder of the Wranitzky Kapelle and artistic director of Academy Prague Mannheim with Das Kurpfälzische Kammerorchester Mannheim. He attended the masterclasses of conductor Leonid Grin at the International Järvi Academy for Conducting, and has also taken masterclasses with Michael Tilson Thomas, Jorma Panula and Gerd Albrecht. Since 2020 he has been the permanent principal choirmaster of the Czech Boys' Choir, Boni Pueri.

www.arcodiva.cz/en/agency/instrumental-soloists/marek-stilec



Paul Wranitzky, after Bossler

Paul Wranitzky, Mozart's masonic brother, was a favourite composer of the Viennese court for which he wrote exclusive compositions. Wranitzky was a characterful composer with a masterful sense of orchestration, but his sudden death in 1808 saw his legacy overshadowed by his contemporaries Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven. The composer's mature *Symphony in C major* is a fine example of his abilities, and the finale of the *Symphony in D major* bursts into life in fine Janissary style, complete with triangle, cymbals and Turkish drum.



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(1756–1808)



Orchestral Works • 7

Symphony in D major 'Con musica turca' (1790s)

26:12

- 1 I. Grave – Allegro spiritoso 10:48
- 2 II. Capriccio: Largo 6:56
- 3 III. Menuetto: Allegretto – Trio 3:04
- 4 IV. Finale: Rondo allegro 5:20

Merkur, der Heiratsstifter (‘Mercury the Matchmaker’) (1793)

8:00

- 5 Prologue: Overture – Allegro presto 3:51
- 6 Act I: Sinfonia – Allegro 4:07

Symphony in C major, Op. 35, No. 1 (pub. c. 1799)

25:51

- 7 I. Adagio – Presto 8:40
- 8 II. Allegretto con moto 6:52
- 9 III. Menuetto un poco allegretto – Trio 5:04
- 10 IV. Finale: Presto 5:12

Die Rache (‘The Revenge’) –

Act I: Introduction and

Act II: Sinfonia (1795)

6:57

- 11 Andante con moto – Allegro

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice

Marek Štilec

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The scores used for these recordings are available for free download at www.wranitzky.com

Cover: *A Lady in Turkish Dress and Her Servant* (detail) (1750) by Jean-Étienne Liotard (1702–1789)

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