

November 11, 2023

7:30 pm

“Hollywood Magic”

Armed Forces Salute

Arr. Bob Lowden (1920 - 1998)

Overture to *The Adventures of Robin Hood*

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897 - 1957)

Rondo in C Major for Violin and Orchestra

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791)

Alexi Kenney, violin

Violin Concerto in D Major

Igor Stravinsky (1882 - 1971)

- I. Toccata
- II. Aria I
- III. Aria II
- IV. Capriccio

Alexi Kenny, violin

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 3, Op. 44, in A minor

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873 – 1943)

- I. Lento – Allegro moderato – Allegro (A Minor)
- II. Adagio ma non troppo – Allegro vivace (C-Sharp Minor)
- III. Allegro – Allegro vivace – Allegro (Tempo primo) – Allegretto – Allegro vivace (A Major)

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Armed Forces Salute

Arr. Bob Lowden (b. Camden, New Jersey, July 23, 1920; d. Medford, New Jersey, October 30, 1998)

To honor our veterans of the Armed Forces for Veterans Day, we feature a piece that's a favorite: *Armed Forces Salute*, arranged by Bob Lowden. This is a wonderful medley of service songs including *The Caisson Song* (Army), *Semper Paratus* (Coast Guard), *The Marines' Hymn*, *The Air Force Song*, and *Anchors Aweigh* (Navy).

The short melodic tunes are easy to spot at the beginning of the piece, including phrases from *Columbia*, *the Gem of the Ocean*, and *America the Beautiful*. We also hear *When Johnny Comes Marching Home*.

Robert William "Bob" Lowden, an internationally known arranger and composer, was one of the best-known modern-day arrangers for orchestra, bands, and jazz bands. His works encompass professional orchestras, film, and recordings, and he was a major contributor of musical arrangements for America's college and high school performers. Appropriately, during World War II, he served as a trombonist in the Military Music Chapel of the 322nd United States Army in Fort Dix.



Robert "Bob" Lowden

Overture to *The Adventures of Robin Hood*

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (b. Brno, Czech Republic, May 29, 1897; d. Hollywood, California, November 29, 1957)

The first performance of the orchestral suite which highlighted selections of the film score for *The Adventures of Robin Hood* was performed on June 24, 1938, in Oakland, California, by the Bay Region

Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Erich Korngold. He won the Academy Award for Best Original Score for *The Adventures of Robin Hood* in 1938.

“Yet, music is a stepchild in movies. Its budget is small in comparison to the budget of the film, and music in films is, however, really complex,” writes Donald S. Passman in *All You Need to Know About the Music Business* – Eighth Edition. “In fact, it may not be possible to record the music until the studio knows exactly what the picture looks like. Film music is complicated. The music supervisors (who coordinate the music for a film) and studio executives in charge of film music have extraordinarily difficult jobs.”

And that isn’t even taking into account all the work of the composer and orchestrator! “A good film score can radically increase the impact of the movie,” adds Passman.

In the 1930s the genres where music is most present and often takes a leading role are adventure films including music by Korngold. Emilio Audissino in his book, *John Williams’ Film Music*, gives a history of the development of music for movies from the 1930s through to Williams’ own movie music, including Korngold.

“In fact, it is evident that John Williams borrowed from Korngold’s scores in the 1970s,” writes Ben Winters in his book, *A Film Score Guide for The Adventures of Robin Hood*. “The heroic title theme of Williams’ *Superman* score (1978), for example, bears a striking resemblance to Emily’s theme from one of Korngold’s film scores, *Devotion*.” Another score of Williams’ sounds like the score of Korngold’s for *The Prince and the Pauper* of 1937.

A composer and conductor born in Brno, Czechia, Korngold arrived in Hollywood in 1934 with a shining classical reputation. In fact, he had astounded the music world with his concert works and his operas. As a child prodigy and teenage composer, pianist, and conductor, he had the most prominent European composers and conductors including Mahler, Puccini, Richard Strauss, and Bruno Walter helping direct his music education by recommending teachers and places to study. In fact, Artur Schnabel writes in his biography *My Life and Music* that he (Schnabel) gave the first performance of Korngold’s *Piano Sonata No. 2 in E Major* (composed when he was just twelve) which Schnabel played throughout Europe. “The work was really amazing.”

Author Audissino continues, “Korngold did not only institutionalize the way a score for an adventure film should sound – late romantic dialect, lush orchestration, prominent brass section – but brought to the task the sensitivity and mastery of an opera composer and formal strength.”

The highly talented Korngold wrote some of the best film scores in history. His touch consisted in treating the film score as an opera score. Korngold would see a film as a libretto to be scored and applied to the film work the same energy, creativity, and expertise that he would devote to this own symphonic music. He showed how to compose scores that successfully served the film while maintaining full-bodied phrases and a proper overall musical solidity of form and development.

“Korngold, a Mid-European composer, gave the most fundamental and lasting contribution to the classical style of American film music,” writes Audissino.

While in Europe before returning to America for work on *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, Korngold spent a great deal of time in Vienna’s public libraries researching the Robin Hood legend. Brendan G. Carroll

writes in his biography, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold: The Last Prodigy*, that “his work could begin on sketching themes for the main characters immediately.” Carroll continues that Korngold “spent the sea journey back to America working on the score – composing and improvising on the piano that was in his stateroom.”

The Adventures of Robin Hood had a star-studded cast which included Errol Flynn as Robin Hood and Olivia de Havilland as Maid Marian. Tony Thomas writes in his book, *The Films of Errol Flynn* that the movie was tailored for Flynn and given a budget of \$1.6 million which eventually reached \$2 million! He adds that much of the story was taken from Sir Walter Scott’s novel *Ivanhoe*.

Errol Flynn went into pre-production for the movie spending the first few weeks studying archery, writes Tony Thomas in a second book, his biography called *Errol Flynn, the Spy Who Never Was*. Flynn then took fencing lessons – and was a natural athlete – which made his dueling look good on the screen. “Korngold’s masterful score considerably aided the duel,” continues Thomas. “Rich with brass and percussive effects, the thick-textured strains emphasized each stroke of the blades. The entire score remains one of the most perfect blends of film and music.”



Erich Korngold

Rondo in C Major for Violin and Orchestra, K. 373

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (b. Salzburg, Austria, January 27, 1756; d. Vienna, Austria, December 5, 1791)

Alexi Kenney, violin

This Rondo score calls for two oboes, two horns, and string orchestra. The duration is approximately four minutes.

Mozart wrote the work in Vienna as music for a concert for the Archbishop on April 8, 1781. The event occurred at the palace of the archbishop’s convalescing father, Prince Rudolph. Robert W. Gutman writes about the evening in his book, *Mozart: A Cultural Biography*, that Mozart provided three new works: an aria (K. 374), this Rondo (K. 373), and a violin sonata (K. 379/373a) with piano accompaniment which he had completed the previous night. Interestingly, while the violin part was written out, Mozart played the accompaniment from memory. Both the aria and the rondo had the same accompaniment of two oboes, two horns, and a string orchestra.

According to a letter he authored to his father on June 1, 1781, following the concert – as written in *The Letters of Mozart and His Family*, third Edition, edited by Emily Anderson – he composed the Rondo for a violinist named Brunetti. This music was in addition to other works including a violin sonata for which he, himself, performed the accompaniment. Yet, Mozart seemed to be most unhappy because he was not paid for the concert or the compositions. However, it has lasted, and we are now able to hear it some 240 years later!

Of interest is the notation “K.” before each number of Mozart’s compositions. “Mozart started his own catalog at the time of his earlier great successes as a composer and virtuoso; however, he only entered those works that he thought were up to his standards,” writes Wolfgang Hildesheimer in his book, *Mozart* (translated from the German by Marion Faber). Therefore, Ludwig von Köchel created the Köchel (K-listing) catalogue listing 626 works by Mozart including those that Mozart did not necessarily want to be retained. Köchel was an Austrian musicologist, writer, composer, botanist, and publisher; he created his catalogue in 1862. The catalogue has been revised several times, but remains the key listing of Mozart’s compositions.



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Violin Concerto in D Major

Igor Stravinsky (b. Saint Petersburg, Russia, June 17, 1882; d. New York City, New York, April 6, 1971)

Alexi Kenney, violin

The score calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, cor anglais, one E-flat clarinet, two clarinets in A/B \flat , three bassoons (third doubling contrabassoon), four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, strings, and solo violin. A performance will last approximately 20 minutes.

- I. **Toccata**
- II. **Aria I**
- III. **Aria II**
- IV. **Capriccio**

Many of us first fell under the spell of Igor Stravinsky with his *Firebird Suite* and his *Rite of Spring*. Yet, how exciting it is to learn that he also wrote a violin concerto!

“Stravinsky grew up in St. Petersburg, Russia where he attended the local school until he was fourteen or fifteen. He studied history, mathematics, Latin, Greek, French, German, Russian, and Slavonic,” writes Eric Walter White in *Stravinsky: The Composer and his Works – Second Edition*. He lived a happy life and loved music since his father was also an opera singer. The young Igor began regularly attending operas – and rehearsals – including those of Rimsky-Korsakov. A piano student, too, he spent a great deal of time sight-reading many of his father’s vocal scores.

Soon he started taking music theory, harmony, and counterpoint studies including more serious piano lessons. Yet, not wanting a musical career for their son, his parents sent him to St. Petersburg University to study criminal law and legal philosophy for four years. Ironically, one of his fellow students was Vladimir Rimsky-Korsakov, the youngest son of the composer. And guess who arranged for a visit to the home of his new student friend! Stravinsky, after finding an opportunity to tell Rimsky-Korsakov of his longing to become a composer, asked for the great composer’s advice. Rimsky-Korsakov advised him to continue his studies in harmony and counterpoint. His work should be systematically supervised and suggested this should be done by private lessons, adding that he would always be ready to offer advice.

White continues, “Stravinsky started to go to the Rimsky-Korsakov house when compositions by Rimsky’s pupils were performed and discussed. From that period on for about three years, he then received regular instruction from Rimsky-Korsakov. He had two lessons a week, each lasting about an hour. Among everything else, Rimsky-Korsakov taught him the registers of the different instruments of the orchestra, and the first elements of orchestration.”

Stravinsky was on his way to becoming a future world-renowned composer with his regular, advanced orchestration studies from Rimsky-Korsakov that lasted well into his marriage and even after his first son was born. Interestingly, Stravinsky was not mentioned in Rimsky-Korsakov’s autobiography; Rimsky-Korsakov had many students and didn’t mention any of them.

The *Violin Concerto* was premiered on October 23, 1931, in Berlin, being broadcast, with Samuel Dushkin playing the violin and the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Stravinsky himself. Dushkin also gave the work’s first U.S. performance in January 1932, with Serge Koussevitzky conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He also made the first recording of the piece in 1935, with Stravinsky conducting the Orchestre Lamoureux.

The *Violin Concerto* was commissioned by Blair Fairchild, an American composer, diplomat, and the patron of the young Polish violinist Samuel Dushkin who had studied violin with the famous violinist, Leopold Auer. Leopold Auer was a Hungarian violinist, academic, conductor, composer, and instructor. Many of his students went on to become prominent concert artists and teachers.

The idea that Stravinsky, a Russian composer, pianist, and conductor (later of French citizenship and American citizenship) should compose this violin concerto came from Willy Strecker, one of the directors of the music publishing house of B. Schott’s. Schott’s is one of the oldest German music publishers. In fact, the house of Schott’s took over the publications of some of Stravinsky’s earlier compositions. The publisher also served as an agent for Serge Koussevitzky’s Edition Russe de Musique, writes Michael Steinberg in his book, *The Concerto*. Koussevitzky was a Russian-born conductor, composer and double-bassist who conducted the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1924 to 1949.

White writes that the composer hesitated to write a violin concerto because he was not a violinist and had slight knowledge of the instrument. However, violinist Samuel Dushkin was always available to

furnish technical details that were required. The two worked very well together to produce this concerto.

Stravinsky also consulted Paul Hindemith (himself a fine violist), a German composer, music theorist, teacher, and conductor. According to White, Hindemith reassured Stravinsky that his lack of the violin performing was a positive advantage, as it would make him avoid a routine technique and would give rise to ideas which would not be suggested by the familiar movement of the fingers. White also notes that Stravinsky examined all the important violin concertos in the classical repertoire before beginning to compose his own.

The First Movement (Toccata) shows interchange between the solo violin and the orchestra. The main subject in thirds seems to have a keyboard derivation, is accompanied by a counter-subject based on the arpeggio of the common chord with rising notes, and each subject is equally suitable for presentation by the solo instrument or the orchestra.

Instead of a single slow movement, the violin concerto has two contrasting arias, the Second Movement (Aria No. 1) and the Third Movement (Aria No. 2). The first Aria (in D minor) starts as a fast-moving two-part invention between the solo violin and the cellos, accompanied by occasional outbursts of repeated notes playing spiccato by the other strings. Throughout this movement the solo violin has a most extended part, covering a wide range. By way of contrast, the second Aria (in F sharp minor) is a beautiful slow lyrical cantilena for solo violin, which almost stays within the range of a human voice. The orchestral accompaniment is from the strings, recalling the style of some of J. S. Bach's slow movements. Steinberg writes that American pianist Charles Rosen called Stravinsky the greatest melodist among twentieth-century composers; this second Aria is eloquent support for such a claim.

Although there is no cadenza as such for the solo violin, the coda to the Fourth Movement (Capriccio) is a kind of extended cadence with virtuoso passages of double-stopping for the soloist.

Violinist Isaac Stern writes in his book *My First 79 Years* that the head of Columbia Records, Goddard Lieberson, strongly supported Stravinsky, who was his good friend. Lieberson recorded practically all of Stravinsky's works then available for recording and arranged for Stern to record the Stravinsky *Violin Concerto*, with the composer himself conducting.

Remarkably, the concerto was choreographed by George Balanchine as *Balustrade* in 1941. It premiered on January 22, 1941, with Colonel de Basil's company Original Ballet Russe. In 1972 Balanchine created a new ballet to the music, entitled *Violin Concerto* and had since been retitled *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*. It was premiered in 1972 by the New York City Ballet at the New York State Theatre as part of the Stravinsky Festival.



Igor Stravinsky

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 3, Op. 44, in A Minor

Sergei Rachmaninov (b. Semyonovo, Russia, April 1, 1873; d. Beverly Hills, California, March 28, 1943)

- I. Lento – Allegro moderato – Allegro (A Minor)
- II. Adagio ma non troppo – Allegro vivace (C-Sharp Minor)
- III. Allegro – Allegro vivace – Allegro (Tempo primo) – Allegretto – Allegro vivace (A Major)

This work calls for two flutes and piccolo, two oboes and English horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, xylophone, triangle, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, tambourine, celesta, two harps, and strings.

Rachmaninov composed the first and second movements of this *Symphony No. 3* during the summer of 1935 and the third movement in the summer of 1936. The first performance was given on November 6, 1936 by “his favorite orchestra,” the Philadelphia Orchestra. Leopold Stokowski conducted.

Rachmaninov subsequently made some revisions which were completed in 1938, writes Michael Steinberg in *The Symphony – A Listener’s Guide*. “The work was reintroduced in its definite form that fall, again by the Philadelphia Orchestra, this time with Eugene Ormandy conducting.”

A landscape of the beautiful Russian north country is where Rachmaninov lived his early childhood. He would always recall this when he tried to recapture the lovely sunny, blurred memory of his youth in his music. “It was an idyllic picture,” writes Sergei Bertensson in his biography *Sergei Rachmaninoff – A Lifetime in Music*. “Moving to Moscow as a young 12-year-old boy, he began the intense music training that filled every waking moment of his every day,” continues Bertensson. Starting with piano lessons, he later moved into the fields of theory and harmony. This was a musical paradise. Rachmaninov continued to progress and began composing works for piano. His training was divided between piano, harmony, and composition.

The young composer grew into a mature and well-versed – not to mention well-traveled – composer because of his immense talent. He left Russia a famous composer, a highly esteemed conductor, and a most distinguished pianist. Amazingly, at that point he was offered the music directorships of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Cincinnati Symphony but decided against taking either position.

In December 1917 Rachmaninov left Russia, never to return. He lived in Copenhagen for almost a year, and then sailed for America. He and his wife and their family eventually settled in Locust Point, New Jersey and New York City. In 1929, the family then moved back to Europe to build a villa near Lucerne, Switzerland, returning later in 1939 to America buying a home in California.

Sergei Bertensson concludes that Rachmaninov had a most interesting life, ultimately moving to Beverly Hills where his neighbors were Vladimir Horowitz and his wife, Wanda. Mrs. Horowitz is the daughter of the famous conductor Arturo Toscanini. In 1943, Rachmaninov passed away in Los Angeles and his body was taken east and buried in a cemetery near a little New York town named Valhalla.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Steinberg provides an excellent description of *Symphony No. 3*. “Rachmaninov begins his *Third Symphony* with a mysterious chant-like melody in just three notes played softly by the clarinet, two stopped horns, and a single muted cello ... then silence.” Then the tempo changes with an outburst by the full orchestra playing a melody of extraordinary rhythmic subtlety, flexibility, and span.

“The second movement begins with a variant of the same chant – heard previously – now a horn solo heard against a splendidly spreading bouquet of harp chords,” Steinberg writes. “Soon a new quick tempo is set, and a scherzo has started, again full of triplets. Rachmaninov ends with a dark reminiscence of the motto. The scoring is rich in fantasy, including a flute solo with harp-and-celesta ripples and a soft curtain of chords on four solo violas.”

“The third and final movement is vigorous and in a bright A-major key,” continues Steinberg. “This is an eventful, confident, handsomely shaped, brilliantly scored movement.” This ultimately leads to a brief episode of a rather sour funeral music which in turn introduces the Gregorian *Dies irae* from the Mass for the Dead. “With unflagging invention, Rachmaninov drives the symphony to a roaring and slightly capricious conclusion.”

Pianist Stephen Hough who has performed and recorded the piano concertos of Rachmaninov writes in his book, *Rough Ideas*, that this *Third Symphony*, written almost thirty years after the *Third Piano Concerto* is the only symphony that Rachmaninov recorded himself, and it is a performance that shows him as an indisputably great conductor. The recording was made in 1939 with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Hough relates that the *Third Symphony* “is full of tears. Some eighty years after the piece was written and premiered, I think Rachmaninov would be happy and content to know how much he, his music, and this piece are loved.”



Sergei Rachmaninov