

Concerto No. 1 for Violin and Orchestra in G Minor, Op. 26

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, strings.

Duration: 24 minutes in three movements.

THE COMPOSER – MAX BRUCH (1838-1920) – Though he actively composed throughout his life, many of Bruch's most rewarding professional successes were on the podium. From 1878 to 1890, he held conducting posts in Berlin, Liverpool and Breslau, after which he settled for good in Berlin as a professor at the Hochschule. Respighi and Vaughan Williams were among Bruch's students there but when he passed away in 1920, the world had almost completely passed him by.

THE HISTORY – Had it not been for his friendships with the violin luminaries of his day (Ferdinand David, Joseph Joachim, Pablo de Sarasate) and the nine works he composed for their instrument, Bruch's music might well have been entirely forgotten. He was an avowed devotee of Mendelssohn and Schumann and an equally passionate opponent of Wagner and Liszt. It was an unpopular position to maintain as the new century approached and Bruch's old-fashioned sensibilities did a disservice to his reputation and legacy. The penalty might well have been fatal if not for works like the 1st Violin Concerto and the *Scottish Fantasy*. Bruch had been mulling ideas for a concerto since he was in his late teens but didn't commit to them until 1866, when Otto von Königsloew premiered the new work in Koblenz. Almost immediately following the performance, the composer began making revisions and approached Joseph Joachim for assistance. Joachim offered welcome advice concerning the shape and structure of the music and after some not inconsiderable changes to the score, the concerto was performed again (*premiered* again, really) in 1868 by Joachim. It quickly became and remains Bruch's most popular utterance by far, which frustrated the composer. The final, more tragic humiliation came from the fact that Bruch never saw much income from the work. He sold the rights early on for a small fee and later, when he was really struggling financially, he was duped out of his autograph copy of the score by former colleagues.

THE WORLD – Liechtenstein disbanded her army and declared permanent neutrality in 1868. Other notable occurrences included the death of Siam's King Rama IV, the beginning of Cuba's ten-year war with Spain and the publication of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot*.

THE CONNECTION – The 1st Violin Concerto was performed most recently in 2014 under the baton of John Giordano. Simone Porter was soloist.