

*Kindertotenlieder* (Songs on the Death of Infants) is a collection of more than four hundred poems of lamentation by the German poet Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866). Extracting five poems from the collection, Mahler, a master at expressing elegiac emotions in music, reached glorious heights in his settings. The first three of the five were set to music in 1901 and the last two in 1904. The orchestration of Mahler is large, with emphasis on the horns, woodwind, strings, and harp. It is one of the bitter ironies of music history that Mahler was warned by his wife, Alma, to stay away from the Rückert poems, which she saw as a bad omen. Mahler persisted, responding to an inner compulsion to continue with the work. Just three years after its completion, their elder daughter died of scarlet fever, just as the child mourned by the Rückert poems.

Mendelssohn was just twenty-four years old at the time he completed his fourth symphony, known as the *Italian*, after his visit to Italy in 1830. From a letter written on 10 October 1830, he exclaimed: "This is Italy! What I have been looking forward to all my life as the greatest happiness is now begun, and I am basking in it!" Though the sketches for the symphony were laid out in Italy, Mendelssohn completed the score upon his return to Berlin. The premiere performance took place in London in 1833, but the revised and final version, as it stands today, was completed four years later. The first movement (*Allegro vivace*) exudes the happy atmosphere that surrounded him on his first visit to Italy, as echoed in his October 1830 letter. The second movement (*Andante con moto*), with its lugubrious mood, suggests his encounter with a pilgrims' march in the city of Naples. The third movement (*Con moto moderato*), a smooth and elegant classical minuet with trio, is the consummate Mendelssohn in one of his most exquisite musical expressions. The finale (*Saltarello: Presto*) capitalizes on one of Italy's oldest dance forms, the sixteenth-century *saltarello*, a jovial, frisky dance utilizing a bouncing motif in triple time. There are two *saltarello* themes, as well as a third, a *tarantella*, gracefully executed in triplets.

Program notes by Elmer Booze

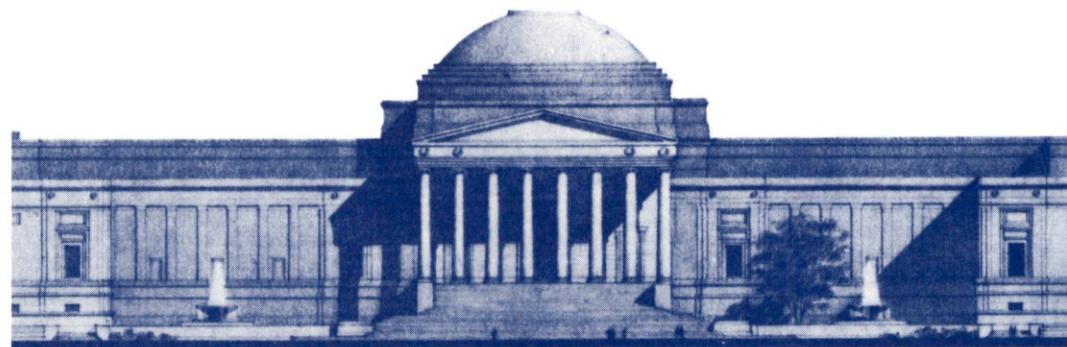
*For the convenience of concertgoers  
the Garden Café remains open until 6:30 p.m.*

*The use of cameras or recording devices  
during the performance is not allowed.*

*The Fifty-eighth Season of*

THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and  
F. LAMMOT BELIN CONCERTS

National Gallery of Art



*2325th Concert*

NATIONAL GALLERY ORCHESTRA

GEORGE MANOS, *conductor*

BEVERLY BENSO, *contralto*  
*guest artist*

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Sunday Evening, 28 November 1999  
Seven O'clock  
West Building, West Garden Court

*Admission free*

## PROGRAM

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
(1756–1791)

Overture to  
“The Marriage of Figaro”  
K. 492 (1786)

Gustav Mahler  
(1860–1911)

Kindertotenlieder  
(1901–1904)

1. Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgeh'n!
2. Nun seh' ich wohl, warum so dunkle Flammen
3. Wenn dein Mütterlein tritt zur Tür herein
4. Oft denk' ich, sie sind nur ausgegangen!
5. In diesem Wetter, in diesem Braus

## INTERMISSION

Felix Mendelssohn  
(1809–1847)

Symphony No. 4 in A Major (“Italian”)  
Op. 90 (1831–1833)

Allegro vivace  
Andante con moto  
Con moto moderato  
Saltarello: Presto

Conductor, composer, and pianist **George Manos** has been director of music at the National Gallery of Art and conductor of the National Gallery Orchestra since 1985. He is also artistic director of the American Music Festival and of the National Gallery vocal and chamber ensembles, which he founded. Manos' career as a performing pianist and teacher has included several years on the faculty of Catholic University in Washington, DC, where he taught piano, conducting, and chamber music. In addition, he held the directorship of the Wilmington, Delaware, School of Music, where he presented an annual jazz festival and clinic. Maestro Manos founded and directed for ten years the renowned Killamey Bach Festival in the Republic of Ireland, and was the music director of the 1992 Scandinavian Music Festival in Kolding, Denmark.

Contralto **Beverly Benso** is a favorite of Washington conductors and audiences as an oratorio and concert soloist. She is often invited to sing outside the Washington area as well, and has sung at the Akron, Ohio, Chamber Music Series, the Salzburg Festival in Austria, and the Rheingau Festival in Germany. In March she sang with fellow members of the National Gallery Vocal Arts Ensemble at the invitation of the Schloß Belvedere Museum in Vienna, in a concert of American music presented in connection with the exhibition, *America: Die neue Welt in Bildern des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Benso has performed as solo recitalist at the Gallery and with the National Gallery Orchestra under George Manos, singing Elgar's *Sea Pictures*, Brahms' *Alto Rhapsody*, and Richard Bales' *A Set of Jade*.

Two of Mozart's operas, *Der Schauspieldirektor* and *Idomeneo*, were so pleasing to Emperor Joseph II that he commissioned Mozart and his librettist, Lorenzo da Ponte, to produce another opera. He suggested that it be based on the good-humored comedy *Le mariage de Figaro* by the French dramatist Pierre Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais (1732–1799). The comedy took a sardonic poke at the ruling class and, as a result, encountered considerable censorship. Nevertheless, Mozart's cleverly composed operatic version premiered in Vienna on 1 May, 1786, and was triumphantly received. While the opera's success was a revelation to Mozart, it was a source of consternation to his adversaries, court composers Righini and Salieri. These Italian opera composers had failed to gain popularity with the Viennese public through the introduction of their own Italian operas the year before. For them, *The Marriage of Figaro* provided one more reason to be jealous of Mozart; for him, it was a triumph to have succeeded where his Italian rivals had failed.