In January of 1756, Mozart was born into the world of Baroque music, a time when orchestras had just come into more prominent use. In the decades preceding his birth, royal courts began to create places for small orchestras (usually around 25 musicians) to provide entertainment for those who could afford it. But, the orchestra of the 1750s was very limited by comparison to today’s orchestra. For example:

- Brass instruments did not yet have valves (as metal working techniques were not sufficient developed to create them) and tubas had not yet been invented.
- Woodwinds were made entirely of wood; piccolos and bass clarinets did not yet exist, and even the flute was a wooden instrument lacking the range and versatility of today’s modern flute.
- Although the clarinet was in use, it likely did not have more than 5 keys;
- The percussion ‘section’ was invariably just the timpani, or “kettle drum”; and
- The harpsichord – not the piano – was the most common keyboard instrument in Mozart’s world.

Orchestral music was still performed for those of wealth (such as the aristocracy or the church), requiring composers to write with their patron in mind. Understandably, the size and composition of the orchestra varied greatly, depending on practical and financial considerations.

During the 1750’s, the widely-renowned court orchestra in Mannheim was making cutting-edge changes by developing the use of woodwinds and using coordinated bowing for the strings. At the time Mozart was composing, orchestras were still fairly small (between 30 and 40 players at the most) and without question, the strings were the most important section, with the lead violinist (or “concertmaster”) acting as the ‘conductor.’ Parts were often randomly assigned to the instruments available and while the strings eventually developed into the grouping we know today (violins, violas, cellos and even double-basses), the use of wind instruments was less frequent. While woodwind instruments were present, their use was limited; as a rule, if wind instruments played the melody line, it was only to double the strings. If flutes were used at all, it was often in place of the oboes. It was not uncommon for oboists to also play the flute.

Young and impressionable, as well as sensitive to modern influences on music because of his wide travels, Mozart expanded orchestral instrumentation, building the road that led from the “string-heavy” ensembles (as reflected in his early symphonies) to the lush, varied sounds of the post-Beethoven orchestra. There is no doubt that Mozart’s influence on the orchestra was profound.

Much like his operas, Mozart’s instrumental works were tailored to the intended venue and available performers. The symphonies in particular, while stylistically suitable to performances anywhere, were composed with particular audiences, occasions, acoustics and even musicians in mind.
By the time Mozart was composing his “late symphonies” (including the “Prague” Symphony, Symphony No. 38, K. 504 in D Major, which appears on the upcoming Masterworks program), he had developed a heightened awareness of the use of woodwinds and the special characters of these instruments: he was the first to give the woodwinds responsibilities as soloists, bearing the weight of symphony themes. The Prague Symphony features a pair of flutes, oboes and bassoons, with brief solos given to each, and used in six-part harmonies. xi Some theorize that the more-demanding wind parts were influenced by the higher competence of the woodwind musicians Mozart met during his travels in Munich and Prague. xii Others suggest that the extensive use of winds was the product of experimentation Mozart was already cultivating in orchestral accompaniments for his piano concertos during the prior two years. xiii

Whatever the reason, major advances in Mozart’s symphonic composition formed the groundwork for the composers – and orchestras – that followed him. By writing increasingly demanding parts for woodwinds and other instruments, Mozart expanded the scope, size and sound of the orchestra, approaching the lush multi-textured sound we hear today.

The profound influence of Mozart is openly acknowledged in the works of the composers who followed him:

• Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor is a tribute to Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 24 in C minor. An unconfirmed story reports that as Beethoven listened to the unusual coda of the last movement of Mozart’s composition, he whispered to his student, Ferdinand Ries, “We will never think of anything like that!” xiv
• Beethoven’s Quintet for Piano and Winds is another tribute, similar to Mozart’s quintet for the same ensemble.
• Beethoven wrote sets of variations on his themes, including two sets of variations for cello and piano on themes from Mozart’s Magic Flute, and cadenzas to several of Mozart’s piano concertos, including the Piano Concerto No. 20, K.466. xv

Please join the HSO for Mozart & Hartt, April 7 - 10, 2016, to experience the rich sound of Mozart’s music, and challenge yourself to hear his influence on other composers and the development of the modern orchestra.
Masterworks #7:  
Connecting to Mozart: his music is the foundation of today’s orchestra.

The return of Casey’s Classics  
Recommended recordings for your listening pleasure!

Curious about what you will be hearing on the concert program, or want to hear more? Coleman Casey, HSO's dear friend, Director Emeritus and beloved in-house audiophile, offers the following recommendations for recordings of selections featured on our upcoming Masterworks Concert:

The catalog is replete with marvelous records of the incredible masterpiece, *Mozart’s Symphony No. 38 in D Major, K. 504, also known as the “Prague” Symphony*, but my personal favorites include George Szell with the Cleveland Orchestra (SONY), a profoundly tightly organized and crisply-rendered version, or Sir Neville Marriner’s recording with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, which is suave and cultivated with lovely ambience to the recorded sound. (PHILIPS.)

“Mozartiana” by Tchaikovsky (*Suite No. 4 in G Major, Opus 61*) is a marvelous work that never achieved the same popularity as the composer's other works, but none speaks more deeply of his reverence for his idol Mozart and his command of classical forms. Neville Marriner and the Stuttgart Orchestra turn in a very beautiful rendition. (PHOENIX/AUSTRIA.)

Not often heard in concert, *Mozart’s* delightfully witty *Concerto for Bassoon in B-Flat Major, K. 191* is charmingly performed by Matthew Wilkie and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe under the direction of Sandor Vegh. (ASV.)

There are many outstanding recordings of *Bizet’s L’Arlesienne Suite No. 1* but Sir Thomas Beecham and his Royal Philharmonic Orchestra continue to rise to the top of the heap, sixty years after their recording. For sheet wit, elan and charm, nobody does better and the sound is up to the performance. (EMI.)