

Tafelmusik

MOZART & HAYDN

December 1-5, 2010
at Trinity-St. Paul's Centre

Richard Egarr, Guest Director & Soloist

PROGRAMME NOTES

Mozart Symphony no. 1

In June 1763, Leopold Mozart left Salzburg to take his children, eleven-year-old Anna Maria (Nannerl) and seven-year-old Wolfgang, on a concert tour of Europe, a tour that was to last three-and-a-half years and saw them performing in cities throughout Germany, the Netherlands, France and Switzerland. From April 1764 to November 1765 they were in England, playing at court and in public. Nannerl later recalled a period spent outside of London:

On the fifth of August we had to rent a country house in Chelsea, outside the city of London, so that father could recover from a dangerous throat ailment, which brought him almost to death's door. [...] Our father lay dangerously ill; we were forbidden to touch the keyboard. And so, in order to occupy himself, Mozart composed his first symphony with all the instruments of the orchestra, especially trumpets and kettledrums. I had to transcribe it as I sat at his side. While he composed and I copied he said to me, "Remind me to give the horn something worthwhile to do!" [...] At last after two months, as father had completely recovered, we returned to London.

The first public performances of Mozart symphonies were in London, in February and May 1765. Leopold attests that his young son composed four symphonies in England, three of which have survived. The Symphony in E-Flat Major, K.16, is catalogued as his first, and may be the work to which Nannerl refers above – though it has no trumpets or drums, and arguably has little “worthwhile” for the horns. Nor, however, do the other extant London symphonies, so perhaps her memory was less than accurate (the account above was written in 1800). The manuscript score of the E-flat symphony is in Wolfgang's hand, with numerous corrections by his father. The work is very much in the style of the London symphonists Carl Friedrich Abel and Johann Christian Bach, and although simplistic in comparison with Mozart's later symphonies, it is absolutely on a par with many of the works of his adult contemporaries.

Mozart Piano Concerto no. 12

The A-Major Piano Concerto is one of three concertos performed at Mozart's Lenten concerts of 1783. Composed a year after settling in Vienna, it is also the first of the great series of 15 piano concertos he composed in the capital in the 1780s. On December 28, 1782, he wrote to his father:

I must write in the greatest haste, as it is already half past five and I have asked some people to come here at six to play a little music. I have so much to do these days that often I do not know whether I am on my head or my heels. The whole morning, until two o'clock, is spent giving lessons. Then we eat. After this meal I must give my poor stomach a short hour for digestion. The evening is therefore the only time I have for composing and of that I can never be sure, as I am often asked to perform at concerts. There are still two concertos wanting to make up the series of subscription concerts. These concertos are a happy medium between what is too easy and too difficult; they are very brilliant, pleasing to the ear, and natural, without being vapid. There are also passages here and there from which connoisseurs alone can derive satisfaction; but these passages are written in such a way that the less discriminating cannot fail to be pleased, though without knowing why.

Despite the busy schedule, Mozart had completed the remaining two concertos a few weeks later. In January he placed a notice in the *Wiener Zeitung* advertising carefully copied manuscript copies of all three concertos, to be sold by subscription only from his apartment on the Hohe Brücke. His father suggested that the price of four ducats was too high, but Mozart responded, "I believe that I should earn at least one ducat for each concerto, and I can't imagine that anyone could get it copied for one ducat!" His father may have been right, for sales were low – but the concerts were successful, and Mozart's reputation as both composer and pianist greatly enhanced. Two years later the three concertos were engraved and published by the Viennese publishing firm Artaria as Opus 4.

Haydn Piano Concerto no. 11

Although one of the most prolific composers of symphonies of any time, Haydn wrote but few concertos, and only three for piano or harpsichord. The Concerto in D Major was published by Artaria one year prior to the Mozart "Opus 4." It quickly became one of his most popular instrumental works, and was published by eight firms in five countries during his lifetime. Its popularity then and now is due largely to the lively final Rondo "all'Ungarese," based on a folk tune from Bosnia and Dalmatia. It has been conjectured that it was premiered by Fräulein von Hartenstein, a pupil of the Vienna-based Bohemian pianist Leopold Koželuch, at a private concert in Vienna in February 1780.

Haydn Symphony no. 44

The D-Major concerto has none of the intensity of the *Sturm und Drang* period that had influenced so many of Haydn's orchestral works of ten years previous. It had been a remarkably busy and productive period: between 1770 and 1774 Haydn composed 17 symphonies, as well as 12 string quartets, at least half a dozen piano sonatas, two Masses, a *Salve Regina* and four operas. The symphonies are notable for their remarkable consistency, imagination and passion. Only eleven of Haydn's 104 symphonies were composed in a minor key, and seven of those date from this period. Among the most highly charged of Haydn's symphonies is no. 44, in E Minor: counterpoint drives the outer movements, and even the normally graceful Minuet is bound by a strict canon between the violins and the bass. Relief is to be found in the beautiful Adagio. Haydn is said to have requested that this slow movement be played at his funeral, and it is for this reason that the symphony is called "Trauersymphonie" ("Symphony of Mourning").