

# Tafelmusik

## Mozart Mass in C Minor

PROGRAM NOTES

By Charlotte Nediger

### Haydn Symphony no. 98 in B-flat Major



Johann Peter Salomon

Haydn's life changed quite abruptly in 1790 with the death of Prince Nikolaus Esterházy, his employer for almost 30 years. His son and successor, Prince Anton, had little interest in music and disbanded the court orchestra. Haydn moved to Vienna, and was soon visited there by Johann Peter Salomon, a German-born violinist who had moved to London and established a career as a successful impresario. It is reported that Haydn's visitor announced himself with the famous words: "I am Salomon of London and have come to fetch you. Tomorrow we will arrange an *accord*."

An accord was indeed arranged, and the pair left for London shortly thereafter, on December 15, 1790. In a letter home, Haydn wrote of his arrival:

*[After the journey] I am fresh and well again, and occupied in looking at this endlessly huge city of London, whose various beauties and marvels quite astonished me. My arrival caused a great sensation throughout the whole city, and I went the rounds of all the newspapers for three successive days. Everyone wants to know me. I had to dine out six times up to now, and if I wanted, I could dine out every day; but first I must consider my health, and second my work. Except for the nobility, I admit no callers until two o'clock in the afternoon, and at four o'clock I dine at home with Mr Salomon ... Everything is terribly expensive here ... I wished I could fly for a time to Vienna, to have more quiet in which to work, for the noise that the common people make as they sell their wares in the street is intolerable. At present I am working on symphonies.*

Salomon's series opened in March 1791, two months after their arrival, and several of Haydn's works were performed with great success. Performances were co-directed by Haydn at the keyboard (alternately the harpsichord or fortepiano, whichever was at hand), and by Salomon at the violin: he apparently stood in the curve of the keyboard instrument. For Haydn the experience of the audience was entirely different from that at the Esterházy court: this was a paying public, keen to be entertained, and vocal in their response. It was usual for the audience to applaud each movement, and to insist upon instant encores of favourite movements.

Haydn was persuaded to stay another year, and he spent the summer months at various country estates, away from the noise of the city. A second concert season followed in March

1792, and this included the premiere of Symphony no. 98. The symphony is often cited as the most personal of Haydn's London symphonies, probably because it was composed soon after Haydn heard of Mozart's untimely death. Haydn and Mozart were very close friends, greatly admiring each other's work. Just before leaving for London, Salomon, Haydn, and Mozart dined together. Haydn's friend and biographer A.C. Dies recounts:

*... at the moment of parting, Mozart said, "We are probably saying our last adieu in this life." Tears welled in both men's eyes. Haydn was deeply moved, for he applied Mozart's words to himself, and the possibility never occurred to him that the thread of Mozart's life could be cut by the inexorable Fates the very next year.*

The second movement is thought to be an homage by Haydn to his friend, opening with a quotation from the *Agnus Dei* of Mozart's *Coronation Mass*, and later quoting a passage from the "Jupiter" Symphony. The final movement of the symphony is noteworthy, both as the longest finale of all of Haydn's symphonies, and also for the inclusion of passages marked "Salomon solo" (i.e. for solo violin), and for a passage at the end marked "Haydn solo," a short and witty little solo for the keyboard, described in a contemporary account of the first performance as "a passage of attractive brilliancy." Audiences called for encores of both the first and fourth movements at the premiere.

Haydn left London to return to Vienna after the 1792 season, returning again in 1794 for one more year. It is a testament to Haydn's popularity in London that Salomon's tombstone in Westminster Abbey states simply, "He brought Haydn to England in 1791 and 1794." The wonderful eighteenth-century music journalist Dr. Charles Burney wrote:

*... it is well known how much [Haydn] contributed to our delight, to the advancement of his art, and to his own fame, by his numerous productions in this country and how much his natural, unassuming, and pleasing character, exclusive of his productions, endeared him to his acquaintances and to the nation at large.*

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Constanze Mozart

During his employ at the archiepiscopal court in Salzburg, Mozart wrote a great deal of music for the Catholic church. After leaving Salzburg, Mozart wrote only a few sacred compositions: the motet *Ave verum corpus*, and the incomplete Mass in C Minor and Requiem. Ironically, the two incomplete works are Mozart's great sacred masterpieces. Both are works of intensely powerful expression, masterful complexity, and sublime beauty. They are large-scale works, and even in their incomplete form give an impression of grandeur.

Although Mozart's failure to complete the Requiem Mass can be explained by his final illness, the reasons for leaving the C-Minor Mass incomplete remain a mystery. Nor is it known with certainty

why he undertook the composition of a full-scale mass in 1782, a year after leaving Salzburg. In a letter to his father dated January 4, 1783, he wrote:

*I have truly promised this in my heart and hope to fulfill it ... a proof of the reality of my promise, however, is the score of half a Mass, of which I have high hopes.*

As to what he promised in his heart, it is thought that it was a vow to perform a new mass in Salzburg if he succeeded to bring Constanze there as his wife: after a difficult courtship they had married in August 1782. Others suggest it was connected with Constanze's first pregnancy: a son was born in June 1783, but lived for just two months. In any case, the Mass was performed at St. Peter's Church in Salzburg on October 23, 1783, with Constanze singing one of the solo soprano roles. In the performing score and parts, only the *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, and *Benedictus* are complete. The *Credo* breaks off after the *Et incarnatus est*, and the *Agnus Dei* is missing entirely. The orchestral parts for portions of the *Credo* are incomplete. It is not known how the 1783 performance was accomplished: whether, for example, parts were actually finished and subsequently lost, or whether Mozart completed the mass with a pastiche of earlier movements. In any case, the music that remains is remarkable. It is written in the form typical of baroque masses, with the text set in separate movements rather than set continuously, as in later masses. At the time of composition, Mozart was intensely studying works by Handel and Bach, and this is evident throughout the Mass, particularly in the choral writing. To this he adds two virtuoso solo soprano arias inspired by Italian opera. The result is a work that is a summation of the eighteenth century, and at the same time the work of a remarkably creative and original mind.

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