

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
2016-2017 Mellon Grand Classics Season

April 28, 2017

MANFRED HONECK, CONDUCTOR
RUDOLF BUCHBINDER, PIANO

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN Concerto in D major for Piano and Orchestra,
Hob. XVIII:11
I. Vivace
II. Un poco adagio
III. Rondo all'Ungherese: Allegro assai
Mr. Buchbinder

WOLFGANG AMADEUS Concerto No. 20 in D minor for Piano and Orchestra,
MOZART K. 466
I. Allegro
II. Romanza
III. Rondo: Allegro assai
Mr. Buchbinder

Intermission

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN Concerto No. 5 in E-flat major for Piano and Orchestra,
Opus 73, "Emperor"
I. Allegro
II. Adagio un poco mosso
III. Rondo: Allegro
Mr. Buchbinder

PROGRAM NOTES BY DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN

Concerto in D major for Piano and Orchestra, Hob. XVII:11 (before 1784)

Franz Joseph Haydn was born on March 31, 1732 in Rohrau, Austria, and died in Vienna on May 31, 1809. His Concerto in D major was written some time before 1784 and the premiere performance was most likely in Vienna on February 28, 1780. The Pittsburgh Symphony first performed the concerto at Syria Mosque on February 2, 1955, led by William Steinberg with pianist Lorraine Gaal. Most recently, the Pittsburgh Symphony performed the concerto with conductor Antal Dorati and soloist Ilse von Alpenheim on November 25, 1984. The score calls for two oboes, two horns, and strings.

Performance time: approximately 23 minutes

Haydn was among the most industrious composers in the history of music. He summarized his philosophy of no-nonsense professionalism when he wrote, "I know that God has bestowed a talent upon me, and I thank Him for it. I think I have done my duty and been of use in my generation by my works. Let others do the same." His capacity for simple hard work and his seemingly boundless fecundity were apparent as soon as he joined the musical staff of the Esterházy family in 1761, his employer for the next half century. Not only did he compose, but he was also the general administrator of the music establishment, chief keyboard player for chamber and orchestral concerts, and conductor of the orchestra. Regarding the press of Haydn's duties, the noted scholar H.C. Robbins Landon related an amusing anecdote from those years: "He was extremely busy at this time, and when he wrote out the score of the First Horn Concerto he mixed up the staves of the oboe and the first violin, and wrote on the score, as he corrected his mistake, 'Written while asleep.'"

Among the products of Haydn's Esterházy years were some fifty concertos, including perhaps as many as twenty such works for clavier. Though some of these works may have been written on commission (one was said to have been composed for a concert tour of the blind pianist Maria Theresa Paradis, for whom Mozart created his Concerto No. 18 in B-flat, K. 456), several were probably written for his own use at the Palace concerts. Haydn was not a virtuoso keyboard artist of the caliber of Mozart, but he was a competent pianist who frequently participated in the household chamber music and operas. Indeed, in those pre-podium days, he would have regularly led Esterházy's orchestra from the keyboard. It is likely that he wrote this D major Concerto (Hoboken XVIII, No. 11) for himself, though exactly when he did so is unknown: the conjectured dates of the score's composition cover some ten years. The earliest firm evidence for the work's existence is its publication in 1784 in three separate editions, issued in Vienna (Artaria), Paris (Boyer & Le Menu) and London (Longman & Broderip). A. Peter Brown, in his study of *Joseph Haydn's Keyboard Music. Sources and Style* (Indiana University Press, 1986), conjectured that the Concerto may date from as early as the mid-1770s, and have been performed at a concert in Vienna on February 28, 1780. Despite its contemporary popularity (there were no fewer than seven different publications of its parts and score during Haydn's lifetime), the work virtually disappeared after the composer's death. It was that noble pioneer in the authentic modern performance of early music, the harpsichordist Wanda Landowska, who sought out the piece in the 1940s, and had performance materials prepared from Artaria's published edition and a set of contemporary orchestral parts. (Haydn's manuscript has vanished.) Her performance with the New York Philharmonic on February 22, 1945 was probably the first of the D major Concerto in America.

When this Concerto was written, it would almost certainly have been performed not on the then new-fangled fortepiano but on the harpsichord, which was at the zenith of its mechanical and decorative perfection in the 1780s. Mozart, whose position as one of Vienna's most fashionable soloists demanded that he keep up with the latest trends, did not buy his first piano until 1784, just when this Concerto first appeared in print. Haydn acquired his piano four years later. In an astute business strategy in a changing market, Artaria labeled its edition "*per il Clavicembalo o Forte Piano*." Haydn's only reference to the Concerto notes simply that it is for "clavier," the generic 18th-century term for keyboard that could indicate either harpsichord or piano. As performances and recordings of this most popular of all Haydn's keyboard concertos have shown, the work can be successfully negotiated on either instrument.

“The first movement of this Concerto,” according to a contemporary review of Artaria’s 1784 first edition, “breathes the true and genuine spirit of its author; it is neat, sprightly and beautiful.” Like many of Haydn’s symphonies and quartets of the 1780s, this music is largely built from a single theme, announced immediately at the outset and developed with seemingly boundless imagination. The *Adagio* is almost operatic in its tender, expressive mood; its lyricism and touching pathos are reminders that Haydn was one of the busiest and most successful opera composers and producers of his day. Of the spicy finale, marked “Rondo all’Ungherese,” Robbins Landon wrote, “We seem to see dancing figures, whirling before our eyes in front of the campfire on those endless, lonely Hungarian plains, the charm and slightly forbidding aspects of which have captivated any Western visitor of perception and imagination.”

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Concerto No. 20 in D minor for Piano and Orchestra, K. 466 (1785)

W.A. Mozart was born January 27, 1756 in Salzburg, and died in Vienna on December 5, 1791. His Concerto No. 20 in D minor was written in 1785, and it was premiered on February 11, 1785, at the Mehlgrube Casino in Vienna with the composer at the piano. The Pittsburgh Symphony first performed the concerto at Syria Mosque on April 18, 1947, with pianist Walter Hendl and conductor Fritz Reiner. The Pittsburgh Symphony last performed the concerto on April 27, 2014, with music director Manfred Honeck and pianist Robert Levin. The score calls for flute, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings.

Performance time: approximately 28 minutes.

The year 1785 marked an important turning point in Mozart’s attitude toward his work and his public, a change in which this D minor Concerto was central. When he tossed over his secure but hated position with the Archbishop Colloredo in his native Salzburg, he determined that, at age 25, he would go to Vienna to seek his fame and fortune as a piano virtuoso. He found both, at least for the first few years, during which he gave a large number of “Academies,” instrumental and vocal concerts that were popular during the Lenten season, when regular theatrical and operatic activities were prohibited. His concertos for these Academies winningly satisfied the Viennese requirement for pleasantly diverting entertainment, and they were among the most eagerly awaited of his new music. His success in 1784 may be gauged by the length of the subscription list for his concerts, which included more than 150 names representing the cream of the local nobility: eight princes, one duke, two counts, one countess, one baroness and many others of similar pedigree.

The D minor Concerto of 1785 must have puzzled the concert habitués of Vienna. This new and disturbing work, from a composer who had previously offered such ingratiating pieces, did not conform to their standard for a pleasant evening’s diversion. Instead, it demanded greater attention and a deeper emotional involvement than they were prepared to expend. Mozart’s tendency in his later years toward a more subtle and more profound expression was gained at the expense of alienating his listeners. His aristocratic patrons were not quite ready for such revolutionary ideas, and it is little surprise that when he circulated a subscription list for his 1789 Academies, it was returned with only one signature. It is little thanks to Vienna that Mozart’s most sublime masterworks — *Don Giovanni*, the G minor Quintet, the *Requiem*, the G minor Symphony, this D minor Concerto — were created.

The first movement follows the concerto-sonata form Mozart had perfected in his earlier works for piano and orchestra, and is filled with conflict between soloist and ensemble which is heightened by enormous harmonic, dynamic and rhythmic tensions. The second movement, titled “Romanza,” moves to a brighter key to provide a contrast to the stormy opening *Allegro*, but even this lovely music summons a dark, minor-mode intensity for one of its episodes. The finale is a complex sonata-rondo form with developmental episodes. The D major coda that ends the work provides less a lighthearted, happy conclusion than a sense of catharsis capping the magnificent cumulative drama of this noble masterwork.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Concerto No. 5 in E-flat major for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 73, “Emperor” (1809)

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in Bonn on December 16, 1770, and died in Vienna on March 26, 1827. Written in 1809, just after completing his Fourth and Fifth symphonies, the concerto premiered in Leipzig on November 11, 1811, led by Johann Philipp Christian Schulz with Friedrich Schneider as soloist. The Pittsburgh Symphony first performed the concerto at Carnegie Music Hall on December 2, 1897, with conductor Frederic Archer and pianist William H. Sherwood. It was most recently performed on December 6, 2015, with Manfred Honeck and pianist Yulianna Avdeeva. The score calls for woodwinds in pairs, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings.

Performance time: approximately 38 minutes.

The year 1809 was a difficult one for Vienna and for Beethoven. In May, Napoleon invaded the city with enough firepower to send the residents scurrying and Beethoven into the basement of his brother's house. The bombardment was close enough that he covered his sensitive ears with pillows to protect them from the concussion of the blasts. On July 29th, he wrote to the publisher Breitkopf und Härtel, "We have passed through a great deal of misery. I tell you that since May 4th, I have brought into the world little that is connected; only here and there a fragment. The whole course of events has affected me body and soul.... What a disturbing, wild life around me; nothing but drums, cannons, men, misery of all sorts." He belted his frustration at a French officer he chanced to meet: "If I were a general and knew as much about strategy as I do about counterpoint, I'd give you fellows something to think about." Austria's finances were in shambles, and the annual stipend Beethoven had been promised by several noblemen who supported his work was considerably reduced in value, placing him in a precarious pecuniary predicament. As a sturdy tree can root in flinty soil, however, a great musical work grew from these unpromising circumstances — by the end of that very year, 1809, Beethoven had completed his "Emperor" Concerto.

The sobriquet "Emperor" attached itself to the E-flat Concerto very early, though it was not of Beethoven's doing. If anything, he would have objected to the name. "Emperor" equaled "Napoleon" for Beethoven, as for most Europeans of the time, and anyone familiar with the story of the "Eroica" Symphony will remember how that particular ruler had tumbled from the great composer's esteem. "This man will trample the rights of men underfoot and become a greater tyrant than any other," he rumbled to his young friend and pupil Ferdinand Ries. The Concerto's name may have been tacked on by an early publisher or pianist because of the grand character of the work, or it may have originated with the purported exclamation during the premiere by a French officer at one particularly noble passage, "*C'est l'Empereur!*" The most likely explanation, however, and one ignored with a unanimity rare among music scholars, was given by Anton Schindler, long-time friend and early biographer of Beethoven. The Viennese premiere, it seems, took place at a celebration of the Emperor's birthday.

The Concerto opens with broad chords for orchestra answered by piano before the main theme is announced by the violins. The following orchestral tutti embraces a rich variety of secondary themes leading to a repeat of all the material by the piano accompanied by the orchestra. A development ensues with "the fury of a hail-storm," wrote the esteemed English musicologist Sir Donald Tovey. Following a recapitulation of the themes and the sounding of a proper chord on which to launch a cadenza, Beethoven wrote into the piano part, "Do not play a cadenza, but begin immediately what follows." At this point, he supplied a tiny, written-out solo passage that begins the coda. This being the first of his concertos that Beethoven himself would not play, he wanted to have more control over the finished product, and so he prescribed exactly what the soloist was to do. With this novel device, he initiated the practice of completely writing out all solo passages that was to become the standard method used by most later composers in their concertos.

The second movement begins with a chorale for strings. Sir George Grove, of music dictionary fame, dubbed this movement a sequence of "quasi-variations," with the piano providing a coruscating filigree above the orchestral accompaniment. This *Adagio* leads directly into the finale, a vast rondo with sonata elements. The bounding ascent of the main theme is heard first from the soloist and then from the orchestra. Developmental episodes separate the returns of the theme. The closing pages include the magical sound of drum-taps accompanying the shimmering piano chords and scales, and a final brief romp to the finish.