WOLFGANG AMADÉ MOZART

Born January 27, 1756 in Salzburg; died December 5, 1791 in Vienna.

Eine kleine Nachtmusik ("*A Little Night Music*") (Serenade No. 13 in G major), K. 525 (1787)

PREMIERE OF WORK: unknown
APPROXIMATE DURATION: 15 minutes
INSTRUMENTATION: strings.

Eine kleine Nachtmusik is at once one of the most familiar yet one of the most mysterious of Mozart's works. He dated the completed manuscript on August 10, 1787, the day on which he entered it into his catalog of compositions as "*Eine kleine Nachtmusik, bestehend in einem [consisting of an] Allegro, Menuett und Trio — Romance, Menuett und Trio, Finale. 2 Violini, Viola e Bassi*." (The first *Menuett* is lost.) There is no other contemporary record of the work's provenance, composition or performance. It was the first piece of the serenade type he had written since the magnificent C minor Wind Octet (K. 388) of 1782, and it seems unlikely that, at a time when he was increasingly mired in debt, he would have returned to the genre without some promise of payment. Indeed, he had to set aside his furious preparations for the October premiere of *Don Giovanni* in Prague to compose the piece. The simple, transparent style of *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, reminiscent of the music of Mozart's Salzburg years and so different from the rich expression of all his later music except for the dances he wrote for the Habsburg court balls, suggests that it was designed for amateur performance, perhaps at the request of some aristocratic Viennese player of limited musical ability.

Eine kleine Nachtmusik is an enigma, a wonderful, isolated chronological and stylistic aberration of Mozart's mature years that raises to perfection the simple musical gestures of his boyhood. Though sunny and cheerful throughout, when seen in the light of its immediate musical companions of 1787 — *Don Giovanni*, the A major Violin Sonata (K. 526) and the C major and G minor String Quintets (K. 515 and 516) — *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* takes on an added depth of expression as much for what it eschews as for what it contains.