

Program Notes

An Afternoon with Mozart

March 3, 2019

Mozart (1756-1791): *Symphony No. 17 in G, K. 129*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria in 1756. His father, Leopold, was Second Kapellmeister at the court of the Prince Archbishop of Salzburg. Being a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Salzburg was ruled by the Empress Maria Theresa through the appointed Prince Archbishop. Musicians of every type and calling were included in the court. Leopold, though highly placed, was little more than a servant. Wolfgang, throughout his career as an artist and performer, experienced continual contention with the occupant of this princely position in Salzburg and Vienna. From an early age Wolfgang exhibited extraordinary powers with things musical through performance and composition and his father, Leopold, attempted to promote his son and daughter through numerous tours of Italy, Germany, France, the Netherlands and England.

These tours were often difficult with primitive travel conditions. They had to wait for invitations and reimbursements from the nobility and they endured long near fatal illnesses far from home. The family went to Vienna in late 1767 and remained there until December 1768. After one year in Salzburg, Leopold and Wolfgang set out for Italy, leaving mother and daughter at home. This tour lasted from December 1769 to March 1771. Leopold hoped that these visits would result in a professional appointment for his son and indeed ruling Archduke Ferdinand contemplated hiring Mozart, but owing to his mother, Empress Maria Theresa's reluctance to employ "useless people," the matter was dropped and the father's hopes were never realized. Despite the disappointments and difficulties, Wolfgang gained experience, breadth of expression and recognition throughout the music world of Western Europe. He eventually was employed by the Prince Archbishop of Salzburg.

Symphony No. 17 is the second of three symphonies completed by Mozart in May of 1772 when he was sixteen years old; but some of its sections may have been written earlier. There are three movements: Allegro (in common time), Andante (in duple meter), and Allegro. The first movement is notable for the use of the "Mannheim crescendo" while the second movement features a solo violin. *Symphony No. 17* is followed by a symphony number eighteen, that represents a huge step forward by the composer in his growing maturity of expression.

Dr. Edwin Schatkowski

Mozart (1756-1791): *Exsultate, Jubilate, K. 165*

This religious solo motet was composed in 1773 at the time Mozart, residing in Salzburg, returned to Milan, Italy (he was seventeen years old). He composed *Exsultate, Jubilate* for the castrato Venanzio Rauzzini, who gave the first performance in that city. The motet form has origins in the 13th century where both religious and secular texts were intermingled. In the Renaissance the motet text was in sacred Latin, while in the 18th century Germany, Bach used the motet form for some of his most effective, unaccompanied choral works.

In *Exsultate, Jubilate*, Mozart combines “opera seria” style with the three part form of the Italian symphony. The opening part, Aria 1, is in a fast tempo while the second part, Recitativo, is lyrical and restrained. The final part, Aria 2, begins in a slower tempo (unmarked), in a relaxed andante style. It concludes with the brilliant “*Alleluja*,” a favorite of sopranos everywhere.

During the period of his visit, Mozart was awarded the honor of the “Golden Spur” by the Pope. Although he was unable to obtain a court position in Vienna, Mozart remained in the employment of the Archbishop of Salzburg until 1781.

Dr. Edwin Schatkowski

*Exsultate, jubilate,
o vos animae beatae,
dulcia cantica canendo,
cantui vestro respondendo,
psallant aethera cum me.*

Rejoice, resound with joy,
o you blessed souls,
singing sweet songs,
In response to your singing
let the heavens sing forth with me.

*Fulget amica dies,
jam fugere et nubila et procellae;
exorta est justis
inexpectata quies.
Undique obscura regnabat nox,
surgite tandem laeti
qui timuistis adhuc,
et jucundi aurorae fortunatae
frondes dextera plena et lilia date.*

The friendly day shines forth, both
clouds and storms have fled now;
for the righteous there has arisen
an unexpected calm.
Dark night reigned everywhere
[before]; arise, happy at last,
you who feared till now,
and joyful for this lucky dawn,
give garlands and lilies with full right
hand.

*Tu virginum corona,
tu nobis pacem dona,
tu consolare affectus,
unde suspirat cor.*

You, o crown of virgins,
grant us peace,
Console our feelings,
from which our hearts sigh.

Alleluja, alleluja!

Alleluia, alleluia!

Mozart (1756-1791): *Violin Concerto No. 4 in D, K. 218*

As you probably know, Wolfgang Mozart was a brilliant pianist. And if you don't, take note of his 27 piano concertos, most of which he wrote as a means of displaying his talents in the concert hall.

Less well known is the fact that he was a fine violinist and violist. He came by the talent honestly. His father Leopold had held the second violin desk in the archepiscopal orchestra and had written a violin method that was used by teachers for decades. The son sometimes relaxed in his Vienna years by playing viola in a quartet consisting of himself, Haydn, Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf and Johann Baptist Wanhal, all among the leading composers of their time and place.

When he was nineteen, young Mozart embarked tentatively on a career as a violinist. To provide himself with something to play, he wrote five violin concertos. They are probably all he ever wrote, by the way. Two others attributed to him are highly doubtful, and a third is blatant forgery by Marius Casadesus who died in 1947.

Mozart played K. 218 in Augsburg on October 23, 1777, and crowed in a letter to Leopold, that "it went like oil." He had written it almost exactly two years earlier. Evidence suggests that he modeled it on a concerto in the same key written by Luigi Boccherini in 1768 for Filippo Manfredi during their sojourn in Paris. Whether the charge is true, it matters little, since Mozart seems to have been overflowing with musical ideas when he set his work down on paper.

David M. Greene (1992)