Mozart: The 'Jupiter' Symphony

No. 41 in C major, K. 551

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1

The symphony in Mozart's Vienna

Symphonies were ubiquitous in musical life of the late eighteenth century. In Vienna, virtually every public concert began with a symphony, and the evidence suggests they concluded with one, or with a symphony finale, as well. Moreover, every possible performing venue featured symphonies, and writers often drew distinctions among three kinds of symphonies based on these venues and the styles common to each: concert or chamber symphonies, performed in concert rooms, including theaters temporarily devoted to concerts (such as the Vienna Burgtheater during Lent), the larger salons of the nobility, and casinos and gardens; theater symphonies, including opera overtures and music performed before and between the acts of plays; and church symphonies, comprising overtures to oratorios and sacred cantatas as well as symphonies played during the liturgy.[1] By the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the genre "symphony" needed no qualification: it was simply a multi-movement piece for orchestra, a symphony in the modern sense.

The "overture" function of a concert symphony, with subsequent portions given to vocal and instrumental soloists performing arias, concertos, and improvisations, is clarified by this often-cited program of Mozart's concert in the Burgtheater on 23 March 1783, at which Emperor Joseph II and perhaps Gluck were present:[2]

"Haffner" Symphony, K. 385, I–III (?)[3]
Aria (No. 11) from *Idomeneo*, K. 366
Piano Concerto in C major, K. 415/387b
Recitative and Aria for soprano, K. 369
Symphonie concertante, III and IV of Serenade, K. 320
Piano Concerto in D major, K. 175 with new finale, K. 382
Aria (No. 16) from *Lucio Silla*, K. 135
Short fugue for piano, improvised
Variations for piano, K. 398/416e
Variations for piano, K. 455
Recitative and Rondo for soprano, K. 416
"Haffner" Symphony, IV

Symphonies not infrequently began with the broad gestures and loud dynamics of a call to order, something that László Somfai has called a 'noise-killer' effect.[4] But this functional quality to symphonies should not obscure the fact that they were admired and respectfully reviewed, often helping to establish and enhance a composer's reputation. Neal Zaslaw stresses that symphonies in Mozart's time were considered occasional, strictly functional music, composed on an *ad hoc* basis for *ad hoc* personnel.[5] Yet by the 1780s and 1790s, they were considered the touchstone of instrumental style: writers of composition manuals routinely saw the symphony as normative, in multi-movement format and in style, and designed their compositional instruction on it. The most famous of these writers is probably Heinrich Christoph Koch, who described every other instrumental genre in relation to typical symphonic procedures.[6] Distilling these writings suggests that the style embodied by symphonies stood in contrast to a "sonata style," each characterized by a particular kind of expression deriving from a melodic style of large gestures and overlapping cadences in the former and "elaboration, nuance, and detail" in the latter.[7] Michael Broyles argues that, according to these criteria at least, the symphony style became more prevalent in the 1790s, affecting chamber and piano music; future studies will need to address this point. Just as concert halls and pianos increased in size at this time, chamber music and piano music began to be played in public, and thus required a breadth of scale different from music for, as Koch described sets of variations, *Privatvergnügen*.[8]

The overlap between Mozart's decade in Vienna (1781–91) and the decade of Joseph II's sole rule (1780–90; he reigned together with his mother Maria Theresia after his father's death in 1765) has made plausible the assertion that Mozart's search for freedom from the constraints of his employment in Salzburg and independence from his father and the hated Archbishop resonated with the reformist zeal of the enlightened monarch. Andrew Steptoe goes so far as to adduce as reasons for Mozart's continued residence in Vienna during the lean late 1780s both the strength of Mozart's sympathy for the Emperor and the tolerant, respectful climate the Emperor had created in Vienna.[9] Certainly Joseph's opening to the people of Vienna many areas previously reserved to the privileged classes, including the Prater and the Augarten (in which concerts were subsequently held), broadened the possible venues for musical culture to flourish. It is possible to see the brilliant expansion of public concerts in the 1780s as part of this new focus on enjoyments for the people – the inscription over the Augarten gate read "These pleasure grounds are dedicated to all men, by their protector."[10] But patrons among the nobility remained essential for a successful career.

Symphonies for patrons and the public

Because Joseph II eschewed the pomp and lavish court occasions of earlier monarchs, members of the nobility – "twenty princes and sixty counts with their numerous relatives" – took up the slack in sponsoring high-society events, including concerts.[11] The private salons of many of these aristocrats helped fill Mozart's calendar during one extraordinary five-and-a-half week period covering March 1784, when he played twenty-two concerts in thirty-eight days: every Thursday at Prince Galitzin's, every Monday and Friday at Count Johann Esterházy's, three Saturdays at the pianist Richter's series of subscription concerts in Trattner's house (Trattnerhof), in addition to his own series of three private subscription concerts on Wednesdays in the same place, and two public concerts in the theater. Mozart stated that the same people who invited him to no fewer than fourteen salons then paid to hear him six times by subscription; he boasted that he had over one hundred subscribers and "shall easily get another thirty."[12] He also noted, poignantly, that he had little time to compose since he taught every morning and played every evening.

Possibly the preponderance of private venues for his concerts in this period made it unnecessary for him to write symphonies, because only the wealthier patrons had their own orchestras. But even the previous year he had seen no necessity to compose a new symphony for the March 1783 concert (program given above), asking his father instead to send several much earlier symphonies out of which he earmarked the "Haffner" for the public.[13] Given the enormous popularity of the new Finale he composed in 1782 to his Salzburg concerto, K. 175 (known as the Rondo in D major, K. 382, even though it is a set of variations), he may have considered revising movements here and there in older works in hopes of scoring a similar – easily won – success. In private concerts, string quartets were sometimes played instead of symphonies, and of course keyboard works were more prominent.[14] Mozart's special talents on the keyboard commanded more attention in the mid-1780s, and for concertos, a quartet of strings and a few winds may have been considered a group of sufficient size. After all, his first set of subscription concertos, K. 413–15, had been specially designed, he claimed, for performance with string quartet and winds *ad libitum*, and the E♭-major concerto for Barbara Ployer, K. 449, exploited a chamber-music style of contrapuntal and varied textures. Several of the self-described "*große Konzerte*," on the other hand, were written expressly for the public concerts in the theater.[15]

Although Vienna had virtually no regular public concert series, there appears to have been a veritable frenzy of performing activity during Lent and Advent,

when plays and operas could not be performed in the Burgtheater and Kärntnertortheater. Four or five of these concerts were given by the Tonkünstler-Sozietät (usually two in each season), begun by Gassmann in 1772 for the benefit of widows and orphans. Boasting a very large orchestra in which most professional musicians were proud to perform, the Society was best known for its performances of oratorios, during which instrumental pieces like concertos were performed as entr'actes, as well as more diverse evening-length concerts, such as the *grosse musikalische Akademie* of 17 March 1777 at which a symphony by Ordonez was played.[16] Mary Sue Morrow classifies the remaining types of public concerts in Vienna, between the mid-1770s and about 1810, in four groups: Virtuoso Benefits, in which Mozart's concerts "for his own benefit" would clearly fall; Charity Fundraisers, taking their cue from the Tonkünstler-Sozietät in the 1790s; Entrepreneur Subscription Series, though these appear to center around only Philipp Jacques Martin (who in moving from the Mehlgrube in 1781 to the Augarten in 1782 enlisted Mozart for his morning concerts) and Ignaz Schuppanzigh in the late 1790s; and finally a few series organized by various Friends of Music Societies, such as the summer concerts in the Belvedere Palace gardens between 1785 and 1787.[17] Composers would typically seek more than one of these venues for maximum exposure. For example, after Dittersdorf wrote twelve symphonies on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in 1785, he sought to have them performed in Vienna, deciding on six in the Augarten and six in the theater (the latter at least in part because the weather was bad).[18]

Haydn's career during the 1780s has several features in common with Mozart, even though in external circumstance Haydn remained a regular *Kapellmeister* to the Esterházy family, one of the wealthiest in Hapsburg lands. At virtually the same time that Mozart returned in defeat to Salzburg after his Parisian debacle, and started to plot his next attempt at breaking free – January 1779 – Haydn renegotiated his contract with Prince Nikolaus Esterházy in order to take advantage of his ever-increasing fame. From being a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Prince, Haydn himself now owned the rights to his works and was able to negotiate directly with publishers and outside concert organizations on a large, international scale. Indeed, after 1785 Haydn wrote no more symphonies for Eszterháza, instead preparing them for the Concerts de la Loge Olympique (Nos. 82–7) and the Comte d'Ogny (Nos. 90–2) in Paris, for the violinist-businessman Johann Tost (Nos. 88–9), and for Johann Peter Salomon in London (Nos. 93–104). An earlier set of three, Nos. 76–8 of 1783, were written for a planned London trip that never materialized. The international scope of the second half of Haydn's career thus stemmed

from a position of greater independence from his patron, precisely the kind of position that Mozart was unable to win for himself while still employed by the Archbishop.

The price of Haydn's success was being forced to adjust to the new realities of composing for an unknown audience and orchestra. For almost two decades Haydn had trained his ensemble and written for it at Eisenstadt and Eszterháza. He knew the skills of his performers, the size and acoustics of his concert rooms, and an audience whose taste he could form gradually.[19] The 1780s opened the world to him, and he composed for that creation of the late eighteenth century, a musical public. Mozart, whose career had unfolded on an international scale from his childhood, expressed no qualms about the anonymous audience.

Haydn's "Paris" Symphonies were commissioned by a Masonic lodge which held concerts.[20] The Masonic lodges in Vienna had large-scale vocal music; did they also have large-scale orchestral music? The available evidence suggests little beyond the presence of ceremonial music, but with certain interesting exceptions. Outside the so-called "Masonic Funeral Music," K. 477, everything Mozart wrote for his lodge included voices, even one of the versions of K. 477, but certainly groups of instrumentalists were marshalled for such performances.[21] In addition to meetings at which his Masonic works were performed, Mozart participated in three lodge concerts: 20 October 1785 at Anton Stadler's lodge for the benefit of two basset-horn players, where Mozart improvised; 15 December 1785 at "Zur gekrönten Hoffnung" for the benefit of David and Springer, where he played a piano concerto and improvised; and 12 January 1788 at an academy of "Zur gekrönten Hoffnung" in honor of the wedding of Archduke Francis and Princess Elisabeth Wilhelmine of Württemberg.[22] The program at the second of these included two symphonies by Wranitzky, the leader of Johann Esterházy's musical establishment, "specially composed" for the lodge.[23] It is possible that further research will turn up other such events.

Symphonies on concert programs

For every attentive listener like Burney, who thrilled to the symphonies performed before and between the acts of plays and at the beginnings of concerts, there was a multitude of audience members who were rude or oblivious during the symphonies, as reported by Nicolai in 1781 and by various correspondents of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*.[24] Haydn even sought to have his works put in the second half of the Salomon concerts in

London, according to his biographer Dies, because

> The first half was usually disturbed in all sorts of ways by the noise of latecomers. Not a few people came from well set tables (where the men, after the custom of their country, stayed sitting and drinking after the women had proceeded at the end of the meal into another room), took a comfortable place in the concert hall, and there were so overpowered by the magic of music that a deep sleep overcame them. Now imagine whether in a concert hall where not a few but many persons with their snuffling or snoring or hanging of heads present the true listeners with something to chatter about or more probably to laugh at, whether quiet can reign there?[25]

Actually, after the first few concerts in each London season, quite a number began with a Haydn symphony, so he was not entirely successful in avoiding the initial distractions.[26]

It seems important to ask, then, what purpose the symphony served in its ungrateful spot as overture. Morrow points out that it seems anachronistic to criticize the role of "noise-killer" for the symphony when there were few other ways to attract attention to the beginning of the concert: candles could not be dimmed, after all, and the conductor, being part of the ensemble, did not make a separate dramatic entrance.[27] With respect to actual overtures to operas and plays, music theorists were quite specific about the role of that introductory music, usually suggesting ways to prepare the listener generally for the affects of the evening's drama.[28] But Abbé Vogler suggestively remarked that a theater symphony ought to "stir the spectator and prepare him by lowering his resistance to the force of those passions that will be represented on the stage. Displaying fire and splendor, it must enthrall the listener by virtue of the force of its harmonious organization."[29] Would a concert-goer need to have his or her resistance lowered to an evening of concertos and arias? Or rather, does the array of affects in a typical symphony, from the "fire and splendor" of the first movement through the Andante's idyll, the graceful and direct dance movement, to the quick and tuneful finale, prepare the listener by traversing some of the possibilities of contemporary musical style? In mixing single-movement and multi-movement, vocal and instrumental works, the concert-planner clearly strove for a pleasant variety; symphonies and symphony movements were sometimes dispersed throughout a program. We also need to take into account the "framing" aspect of a symphony at the beginning and end of a program, made especially cogent if the finale of the opening symphony is played or even repeated (as in Mozart's concert of March 1783).[30] Today's concert programs are often "thematic" or genre-specific; perhaps the coherence of experience provided by a frame was the late-eighteenth-century equivalent. In those concerts that moved from the orchestral to the soloistic and back to the orchestral, the programs metaphori-

cally traversed a rhetorical pattern: from "general" introduction to "specific" arguments to "general" summing-up. (Chapter 2 will argue for the importance of rhetoric in musical thought of this period.)

In addition, the symphony was the only piece on a mixed program that enabled the audience to concentrate on the skill of the composer without distraction by the need to evaluate the technical proficiency of soloists. The earlier vogue for symphonies featuring *concertante* instruments in the 1760s and early 1770s, as wealthier courts sought to show off the professional caliber of their musicians, had largely passed; by the 1780s, *concertante* instruments were more likely to be given prominent roles in particular thematic areas of the piece (especially the second group and development), individual variations, trios of minuets, or in the occasional "wind cadenza," as in the slow movements of two of Haydn's "Paris" Symphonies, Nos. 84 and 87.[31] That over one quarter of the symphonies performed in Vienna during the 1780s were by Haydn suggests not only his popularity but also that the quality of opening symphonies was a concern of the organizers.[32] But despite the variable styles of opening and closing movements especially, whether by Haydn or Mozart themselves, or by the other composers actually named on programs of the 1780s (J. C. Bach, Dittersdorf, Eybler, Fischer, Gluck, Huber, Kozeluch, Pleyel, Riegl, van Swieten, Winter, Wranitzky),[33] the vast majority of symphonies began with a tutti *forte* gesture; the audience may not necessarily have expected any particular *kind* of "noise-killer," "intrada"-style opening, nor a romping rondo finale, but expectations existed nonetheless.

Public expectations of the symphony

Was there a "typical" symphony profile in the 1780s? By 1780, symphonies had long since abandoned the three-movement format that linked them to earlier Italian opera overtures. Haydn wrote no three-movement symphonies after 1765, while Mozart's "Prague" Symphony, with its famously absent Minuet, remains the exception that proves the rule.[34] The slow introduction, hardly a universal feature, came to dominate in Haydn's symphonies perhaps for two reasons: the increasing size of the forces and rooms for which he was writing (or the fact that he could only speculate about the sizes of rooms and orchestras in Paris and, before 1791, London); and the greater compositional choice in having quiet or off-tonic opening themes possible in the first movement once the big attention-getting gestures have played their part. Three of the six symphonies Mozart wrote after arriving in Vienna have a slow introduction – Nos. 36, 38, and 39.

Beyond its initial gesturing, the first movement of a symphony typically had

an intelligible structure – a dramatic threefold division of material within two large sections (presentation of themes and keys, conflict, resolution) – and sufficient contrast in orchestration; the latter would often delineate the former. Recent studies on the level of understanding of Haydn's audiences suggest that concert-goers not only knew what to expect, formally speaking, but they also reveled in their own powers of enjoyment and understanding, and prized being able to recognize when conventions were being set aside.[35] In the slow movement, a greater diversity of pattern prevailed. After Haydn introduced the slow variation movement into the symphony (No. 47, 1772) and became celebrated for his style of orchestral variations, many other composers followed suit, although Mozart did not, finding sonata forms more congenial.[36] Other formal designs all stressed the pleasures of recognition as well: rondos and ternary (ABA) movements, sonata forms with and without development were all possibilities.

As for the minuet and trio, more members of the audience were likely to be familiar with this stereotype than any other: they played minuets at home, danced to them in the large and small ballrooms in Vienna (the Redoutensäle) or at other gatherings, studied music composition, which usually began with instruction in small forms, or simply attended other concerts.[37] It ought also to be noted that this was the only place on a concert program that a minuet would appear, since minuets were never part of concertos or the other genres to be performed; occasionally a concerto movement or aria might be in "Tempo di Menuet," but this was rare and became nonexistent. The most popular kinds of finales were very fast rondos, or quick sonata-form movements with the square, possibly binary-form themes of rondo style. Haydn and Mozart were assiduous in exploring the possibilities of hybrid forms combining sonata and rondo, although which composer did it first has been debated.[38] In general, the "weightier" movements in a symphony were the first two, although the balance among the movements began to change during the 1780s.

The broadest set of expectations the audience might have, however, had nothing to do with the specific tempos or formal attributes of the symphonies. Rather, in whatever concert venue, symphonies were expected to provide a certain kind of grand musical experience, to be stirring and exciting. These were not expectations anyone would have had for the intimate genres of the keyboard, such as sonatas and trios, or even for string quartets. Not only were symphonies discussed in terms of "grand" or "elevated" style, then, but this style was also differentiated from other less public genres.[39] As we will see in the next chapter, evoking the grand style raises a host of new issues.