Symphony No. 35 in D Major, K. 385, "Haffner"

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Born January 27, 1756 in Salzburg, Austria
Died in Vienna, December 5, 1791in Vienna, Austria

Owing to the detailed correspondence with his father, we know more about the circumstances surrounding Mozart's *Haffner* Symphony than any of his other symphonies. Writing from Salzburg in mid-July 1782, Leopold requested a symphony (serenade) from his son for the ennoblement festivities of Sigmund Haffner, Jr., a childhood friend of Mozart's. (Six years earlier Mozart had composed the eight-movement *Haffner* Serenade for the wedding of Sigmund's sister Elisabeth.) Mozart's life in Vienna was particularly frantic at this time—conducting his new opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio,* making saleable arrangements from the opera before anyone else could, completing other commissions, and preparing to move in anticipation of his upcoming marriage.

With all these pressures in addition to Mozart's tendency to procrastinate, the requested symphony—actually a five-movement serenade plus an introductory march—took Mozart longer to complete than usual. He sent it in several installments to his father, the last of which, sent on August 7, was the additional March (probably K. 385*a* [K.408, no. 2]). The ennoblement had taken place on July 29 and though the date of the festivities is unknown, it is entirely possible the Symphony did not arrive in time. Whether he heard the work or simply studied the score, Leopold's approval is reflected in his son's August 24 acknowledgment: "I am delighted that the Symphony is to your taste."

In December and January Mozart wrote to his father several times requesting the return of the Symphony-Serenade so he could perform it on his concert on Sunday, March 23, 1783. Upon receipt of the work in February, he wrote back, "My new Haffner symphony has positively amazed me, for I had forgotten every single note of it. It must surely produce a good effect."

In order to adapt the piece for the concert hall, Mozart had to do relatively little, suggesting that he anticipated its later use as a symphony. The ease of the adaptation also reflects the blurring of distinction between the genres of serenade and symphony. He pared the work down to the typical four movements by leaving out the March and one of the two minuets that had framed the Andante. (The jettisoned minuet is presumed lost.) He also added pairs of flutes and clarinets to the first and last movements and deleted the repeats in the first movement.

The grand unison opening theme with its imposing octave leaps reflects the pomp of the occasion for which the work had originally been written. This theme dominates the first movement in overt recurrences and in imaginative yet recognizable derivatives. In the August 7 letter to his father, Mozart directed that this movement "must be played with great fire."

In addition to retaining its initial scoring without flutes and clarinets, the graceful Andante shows its serenade origins in its charming ornamentation and the binary proportions of the sonata form. The Minuet provides a prime example of the typical contrasted pair of dances in Classic instrumental music: an active opening section followed by a pastoral trio. The contrast is emphasized in this case by the bold arpeggios of the minuet theme and the lilting stepwise motion of the trio's theme.

Several commentators have pointed out the similarity of the main theme of the finale to Osmin's buffo aria of malicious triumph "Ha! wie will ich triumphieren" from *The Abduction from the Seraglio,* which Mozart had just completed. Some even suggest that Mozart was

sending a sort of personal message to people in his native Salzburg, which he had been happy to leave. According to the August 7 letter, Mozart wanted this movement of wit and comic touches to be played "as fast as possible."

Mozart's March 23 concert opened with the first three movements of the *Haffner* Symphony and closed with the last movement. In between he performed other recent works of his, including several vocal pieces, two piano concertos, another short symphony, and a number of solo piano pieces! Mozart's report that the concert was an outstanding success with the Emperor and the larger-than-usual audience was echoed by the *Magazin der Musik,* Hamburg: "Our Monarch, who, against his habit, attended the whole of the concert, as well as the entire audience, accorded him [Mozart] such animated applause as has never been heard of here."

Variations on a Rococo Theme, Op. 33

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky
Born May 7, 1840 in Kamsko-Votkinsk, Vyatka province, Russia
Died November 9, 1893 in St. Petersburg, Russia

Tchaikovsky began composing his *Variations on a Rococo Theme* in 1876 following the completion of the full score for *Francesca da Rimini* and his immersion in plans for an *Othello* opera, which never materialized. The drastic contrast from a world of fervent dramatic expression to one of grace and elegance was occasioned by a commission from German cellist Wilhelm Fitzenhagen, who had become one of Tchaikovsky's fellow professors at the Moscow Conservatory. Fitzenhagen premiered the piece, conducted by Nicolay Rubenstein, at a Russian Musical Society concert on November 30, 1877.

Tchaikovsky's idea for a "rococo" piece has often been linked to his love of Mozart, and indeed he had been adapting Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* into Russian for a student performance at the Conservatory just prior to composing the *Rococo Variations*. Yet his original theme appears to be a reflection of what Mozart and rococo meant to a 19th century Russian, rather than something specifically Mozartean. The four-bar phrases of the theme, the 18th century size of the orchestra, and the overall atmosphere are the only truly rococo or Mozartean aspects of the work.

The use of the term "rococo" in music is fraught with confusion. Most appropriately it refers to French or French-style works that reflect the rococo style of the visual arts in France from the 1690's to the 1760's—works characterized by delicate ornamentation, graceful elegance, and often a certain sophisticated wit. Relatively recently scholars in architecture and the visual arts have stressed the formal similarities to the Baroque style, rather than viewing the rococo style as a reaction against it. In music the term has been extended to include all European music of the time, including that of Italy, which is where the "early Classic" or "*galant*" style originated. While rococo style traits may exist in certain areas of Italian art of this period, few direct parallels can be drawn with Italian music. "Early Classic" works by Haydn and Mozart have been called "rococo" by the confusing extension of the term, and it may be that Mozart and rococo were linked in Tchaikovsky's mind.

Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations* could be called a variational fantasy, in that the variation form is treated not as a compact sequence in the manner of Mozart, Beethoven or even Brahms, but freely, with interludes and cadenzas. This is evident even in Fitzenhagen's version,

which was published in 1889 and is the one most often played today. Fitzenhagen—who had given Tchaikovsky some advice about the solo part even before Tchaikovsky scored the piece for orchestra—altered Tchaikovsky's work significantly.

The most drastic change was made in the variation order, including the placement of the D minor Andante variation (originally No. 3) closer to the end, presumably because of its applause-drawing power, which Fitzenhagen had reported on one occasion to Tchaikovsky. And Fitzenhagen moved its pair (originally No. 4, D major, Allegro vivo) to follow it because of its perfect contrast with the D minor variation. The slow, triple-time variation in C major, in which Tchaikovsky explored the farthest reaches of the theme, was moved from its seventh position to third. But what to do with Tchaikovsky's original eighth variation which would now follow the transported Allegro vivo with too much similarity?"—Fitzenhagen simply discarded it and tacked the coda onto the Allegro vivo. Other changes included dynamic markings, phrasing and the addition of repeats to both halves of the theme.

This version was published in cello-piano form in 1878 by Tchaikovsky's publisher Jurgenson, who had been assured by Fitzenhagen that the composer had authorized it. Though Jurgenson fumed "loathsome Fitzenhagen" in a letter to Tchaikovsky (who had fled the country after his disastrous marriage attempt), the publication did go through. Moreover, when the orchestral version was published over a decade later, it retained Fitzenhagen's ordering. Tchaikovsky's bitterness over the whole affair stayed with him, for cellist Anatoly Brandukov reported that when a distraught Tchaikovsky was looking over the proofs prior to the 1889 full score publication he said, "That idiot Fitzenhagen's been here. Look what he's done to my piece—he's altered everything!" When Brandukov asked what he would do about it Tchaikovsky replied, "The devil take it! Let it stand as it is!"

Versions aside, Tchaikovsky's beloved work makes equal demands on the cello for rapid, virtuosic passages and singing, tender phrase, and masterfully balances the interplay between cello and accompaniment. Liszt, who heard Fitzenhagen's performance of the work in Wiesbaden in 1879, reportedly remarked to the cellist, "At last here is music again." It would be very interesting to know exactly what Liszt meant by this remark!

Pezzo capriccioso, Op. 62

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky

On July 29, 1887, Tchaikovsky arrived in Aachen, Germany, to tend to his mortally ill friend Nicolay Kondratyev, who had been moved there to take the waters but grew progressively worse. After two weeks Tchaikovsky needed a break from his friend's suffering and volatility, and took a brief trip to Paris, where among various friends he visited cellist Anatoly Brandukov, who had been in his harmony class at the Moscow Conservatory and a student of Tchaikovsky's good friend Wilhelm Fitzenhagen, dedicatee of the *Rococo Variations* (see above). Tchaikovsky returned to Aachen inspired to write a piece for Brandukov, which he began sketching on August 24. The very next day he wrote to Brandukov saying: "I have written a small cello piece, and would like you to look through it, and put the final touches to the cello part."

In early September Tchaikovsky headed back to Russia, having persuaded Kondratyev's family that it was time for a blood relative to take over the bedside vigil. On September 11 he was able to send his publisher Jurgenson the *Pezzo capriccioso* in two versions, the full

orchestral score and an arrangement with piano accompaniment, asking that Fitzenhagen be given the cello part for review. He lamented, though, that "this piece is the single fruit of my musical spirit from the whole summer."

Brandukov gave the first performance with the composer at the piano in Paris on February 28, 1888, at a sumptuous all-Tchaikovsky soiree at the home of Nicolay and Marie de Benardaky, where he also conducted Édouard Colonne's orchestra in a number of his pieces. Brandukov also presented the orchestral premiere—conducted by Tchaikovsky—at a special concert of the Russian Musical Society in Moscow on December 7, 1889.

Tchaikovsky chose the key of B minor for his *Pezzo capriccioso*—the same key as his *Pathétique* Symphony and *Romeo and Juliet*—hardly the key for a "capricious piece" but perhaps an indication of his state of mind as he watched Kontratyev suffer. The cello begins the short melancholy introduction with a downward trajectory that becomes a prominent shape in the piece. When the cello ascends gracefully but somewhat wistfully for the piece's main theme, the bass line makes a stepwise descent and continues with this feature even against flashy new material in the middle section. Caprice perhaps comes into play with this lightning-fast finger work for the solo cello, coupled with the brightening of the turn to the relative major. Rising figures at the end of this section make a neat transition to music of the opening section—abbreviated—and Tchaikovsky concludes with a shortened return to the dazzle of the second section.

Symphony No. 2, Op. 30, "Romantic"

Howard Hanson
Born October 28, 1896 in Wahoo, Nebraska
Died February 26, 1981 in Rochester, New York

For the 50th anniversary of the Boston Symphony in 1931 Serge Koussevitzky commissioned major works from a host of prominent composers, including Stravinsky, Hindemith, Roussel, Honegger, Prokofiev, Respighi, Copland, and Hanson. Hanson's contribution, the *Romantic* Symphony, was premiered by Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony on November 28, 1930, and became the composer's signature piece.

Howard Hanson is typically mentioned in the same breath with the Eastman School of Music, which he was hired to direct at the tender age of twenty-seven by George Eastman of Kodak fame, and which he brought to international prominence during his 40 year tenure in that position. He was also known as an unflagging champion of American music, conducting premieres of works of such illustrious American composers as Samuel Barber, Elliott Carter, Aaron Copland, David Diamond, Alan Hovhaness, Wallingford Riegger, Roger Sessions, and Virgil Thomson, and reviving works by earlier American composers including George Whitefield Chadwick, Arthur Foote, Charles Tomlinson Griffes, Charles Ives, Edward MacDowell, and John Knowles Paine.

As a composer Hanson is known primarily for his six symphonies, though he produced a large number of choral works, chamber music and music for the stage, in particular his opera *Merry Mount*, commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera in 1933. His Scandinavian roots greatly influenced his harmonic style—he often cited Sibelius and Grieg in particular as key influences. For his orchestration techniques, which show a mastery of varied instrumental colors, he gave

chief credit to Respighi, with whom he studied for several years as a recipient of the Prix de Rome.

Hanson's works were performed by major orchestras everywhere, and he received numerous awards and prizes, including the Pulitzer Prize for his Requiem (1943). Despite this recognition his music came to be regarded as obsolete, a judgment that he regarded with undisguised bitterness especially in light of all he had done to promote many varieties of American music. He never embraced serialism, aleatoric music, or any of the other "modern" developments of his time, though he kept an open mind toward their use by other composers. He also recognized that his style lacked "the social standing of . . . Neoclassicism," but he remained faithful all his life to his musical conviction that "Romanticism will find in this country rich soil for a new, young and vigorous growth."

Hanson labeled his Second Symphony "Romantic," explaining in his note for the Boston premiere: "My aim in this Symphony has been to create a work young in spirit, Romantic in temperament and simple and direct in expression." The three-movement work forgoes the scherzo movement of a traditional symphony and is heavily weighted toward the first movement, both in length (almost twice that of the other two movements combined) and in treatment of musical materials. The opening slow introduction furnishes many of the basic ideas for the entire Symphony. The most salient features of the sonata-allegro movement—the main theme (a kind of descending fanfare with its signature harmony), a lyrical episodic theme begun by oboe, and the quiet secondary theme (actually two melodies, one for strings and one for solo horn)—all reappear in various guises.

The tender theme of the slow movement is probably Hanson's most famous; it was even appropriated for radio and television themes. A brass interlude follows, based on material from the first movement introduction. The broad secondary theme subsides into a restatement of the opening.

A movement of great fanfare, the finale serves as a compendium of the entire Symphony. Hanson derives the opening figure and the principal theme with its characteristic dotted (long-short) rhythms from the first movement. He recalls the main and secondary subjects of the first movement at the climax, and at the very end he brings back the slow movement's tender theme, now proclaimed fortissimo by the brass.