

MOZART: Concerto for Flute and Harp

Notes on the Program

By Noel Morris ©2021



By the age of seventeen, Mozart's career as a child prodigy had ended. After years of touring, Salzburg's favorite son settled into life as a court musician, just like his father, Leopold—although young Wolfgang was more of a court musician *plus*. While musicians technically held a rank below that of the valet, Mozart counted members of the nobility as his friends. He gave music lessons to high-ranking ladies and attended concerts and public balls. In the fall of 1773, thanks to proceeds from his glittering childhood career, he and his family moved into a fine apartment. Already, they had grown accustomed to having a private carriage and servants of their own.

Salzburg was home to some 18,000 souls. Graced with Alpine vistas, Italianate architecture, and a fine university, it was nevertheless a sleepy place. Mozart was a point of civic pride. And Salzburg's Prince-Archbishop Schrattenbach was all too happy to underwrite the Mozart family's trips around Europe. When Schrattenbach died in 1771, he was succeeded by a different animal: Archbishop Hieronymus Colloredo. Unlike his predecessor, Colloredo didn't care about the publicity. (In fact, he would be remembered for heavy-handedness, obstruction, and his ultimate attempt to scrub the Mozart name from public record.)

When Wolfgang reached the age of 21, it was time for him to fulfill his father's dream of securing

a prestigious post—all part of Leopold Mozart's master plan to provide for the entire family. To that end, Leopold arranged a job-hunting trip to Germany and Paris. As always, he had expected to accompany his famous son, but Colloredo refused to grant him leave.

In September of 1777, the composer set out with his mother and arrived in Paris six months later. There, Anna Maria Mozart complained of the cold and stayed in bed as young Wolfgang set out on his own to network and play private concerts. **Through an old friend, he met the Duc de Guînes, a French military officer and diplomat who commissioned the Concerto for Flute and Harp. (The duke was a flutist, his daughter a harpist.)** Doing the duke's bidding, Mozart wrote the concerto and gave the girl composition lessons. In the end, Mozart received only a nominal gift for his work. He was furious.

Anna Maria Mozart died in Paris on July 3, 1778. Suddenly 22-year-old Mozart found himself alone in a foreign city where he had to make funeral arrangements, write a letter to break the news to his father and sister, and find work. Already, he was disillusioned with France (he turned down a job offer as organist at Versailles). After six months, he headed to Germany where he entertained the idea of settling and becoming a freelancer (there was a girl there). Leopold objected and ordered him home.

MOZART: Concerto for Flute and Harp

First ASO Performance: **JAN 22, 1959** | Henry Sopkin, conductor | Warren Little, flute | Mary Spalding, harp

Most Recent ASO Performance: **OCT 11, 2015** | Donald Runnicles, conductor

Christina Smith, flute | Elisabeth Remy Johnson, harp

Instrumentation: **Flute, 2 oboes, 2 horns, harp, strings**

BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 4

1 806 was a fraught year for Beethoven; it was a mind-blowing year for music lovers. He wrote his Violin Concerto, his 4th Piano Concerto, his Razumovsky Quartets, his Fourth Symphony, and began the piece we've come to know as "Beethoven's Fifth."

The year before, Beethoven had tried to advance his career as an opera composer, but was having a terrible time. He squabbled with his singers, the emperor's censors, and his friends. In November, Napoleon seized Vienna and stayed just long enough to drive Beethoven's audience away—which was both a curse and a blessing. In truth, the disruption helped to mask a bigger problem with the opera (*Fidelio*): it didn't really work in the theatre. The composer made a number of revisions and launched the opera a second time in March of 1806, only to withdraw the piece for more revisions.

Beethoven's private life was no easier. He suffered from hearing loss, and was further agitated by a dispute with his brother. It was toward the end of that summer that a devoted friend and patron, Prince Lichnowsky, suggested a country getaway to help the composer calm his nerves. With the promise of a private room and a piano, Beethoven packed up his scores, including the unfinished C minor Symphony (the Fifth), and boarded a carriage to Silesia, in what is now the Czech Republic.

Not far from the Prince's estate, a music lover named Count Franz von Oppersdorff kept an orchestra on staff at his castle. He invited the Prince and his famous musical guest for a visit. The Count honored them with a performance of Beethoven's Second Symphony. Beethoven and the Count became friends, and negotiated plans for a new piece.

Setting aside the manuscript that would become the Fifth Symphony, the composer immediately began to draft a spirited symphony in B Flat. Written for the Count's more modest-sized orchestra, the scoring of the Fourth Symphony is leaner than the Fifth, much like that of the Second Symphony.

Unfortunately for Beethoven, the personal aggravations of 1806 continued to mount. That fall, when French army officers visited the Lichnowsky estate, the Prince urged Beethoven to sit at the piano and play for them. Making no secret of his anger toward Napoleon's army, Beethoven refused, and the two friends fell into an argument. In some versions of the story, Oppersdorff had to wrestle a chair away from Beethoven before he could hurl it at the Prince. That very night, Beethoven packed up his things and stormed out of the palace, trudging some distance in the rain. Indeed, the original manuscript of the *Appassionata* Sonata has water stains.

When he arrived in Vienna, Beethoven is said to have smashed a bust of Lichnowsky which had been sitting on his desk. Lichnowsky cancelled Beethoven's annual stipend, and though they eventually put the conflict behind them, their friendship was never the same.

Initially, Count Oppersdorff enjoyed a period of exclusive use of "his" symphony. In 1808, Beethoven conducted its first public performance.

**Atlanta
Symphony
Orchestra** 

BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 4

First ASO Performance: **NOV 27, 1951** | **Henry Sopkin, conductor**

Most Recent ASO Performance: **NOV 5, 2017** | **Jun Märkl, conductor**

Instrumentation: **Flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns,
2 trumpets, timpani, strings**