

NOTES ON THE OCTOBER PROGRAM

JOSEPH HAYDN

Symphony No. 57 in D major

Franz Joseph Haydn was born in Rohrau, Lower Austria, on March 31, 1732, and died in Vienna on May 31, 1809. Haydn's autograph score is dated 1774, and the premiere no doubt took place as soon as the ink was dry. The score calls for pairs of oboes, bassos, and horns in high B-flat (in E-flat for the third movement), plus strings.

The more of Haydn's music we hear, the more we stand in awe at his boundless imagination. The symphonies in F that bear the numbers 57 and 67 (both numbers only vaguely related to the order of composition) come from a period in which Haydn was eagerly exploring the possibilities of symphonic form and expression, writing one work after another for performance in the household of his patron, Prince Nikolaus Esterházy. In the 1760s and 1770s he often created three or four symphonies a year. At Eszterháza, far from Vienna for months on end, with a music-loving prince eager to hear his newest compositions, he found himself, as he said, "forced to become original." He did this by applying approaches from other genres (such as the overture or concerto) to the symphony, to exploiting unexpected harmonic relations (both within a single movement and between movements in a work), and other devices that seem to be of his invention.

The first movement of Symphony No. 57 begins with a striking slow introduction that contains some dramatic chromatic motions before slipping back to the dominant to set up the Allegro, for an assertive march-like theme. After the modulation to the new key, the two violin sections introduce the secondary material, gradually adding the other instruments. The development circles through a series of keys aimed to return to the tonic for the solid close.

The slow movement begins with a simple theme varied four times in progressively faster note values. But its most striking element is the way the materials are presented like blocks rearranged on a board, so that the music of the very first measure, for example, played *pizzicato* with muted strings, comes back in the middle of a phrase or to close off the end of the variations, and the entire movement. In the central variations, this figure is played with the bow, and much more loudly, but at the end of the movement, it closes the music just as it had opened it.

The Minuet of the third movement has the flavor of the more countrified Ländler, while the Trio, with a much lighter texture, moves through harmonies that are very unusual for this context, especially after the rustic good humor of the main section.

For the finale, Haydn races through a lively sonata-form structure with super-speedy (Prestissimo) triplets that carry the motion forward even at what might be expected to be moments of relaxation at the end of sections.

LUIGI BOCCHERINI

Cello Concerto No. 7 in G major, G.480

Luigi Boccherini was born in Lucca, Italy, on February 19, 1743, and died in Madrid on May 28, 1805. The cello concerto in G major is probably the product of his youth, though details are uncertain. The score calls for solo cello and string orchestra.

Luigi Boccherini's life virtually dictated that he would devote himself largely to the composition of chamber music. He was a distinguished cellist from an artistic family in Lucca. Already at fourteen his playing was admired in the imperial court at Vienna, to which he and his father (a cellist and double bass player) had been summoned. During his early years as a virtuoso, he naturally composed cello concertos to display his own abilities. (All of his cello concertos seem to date from an early period, no doubt to provide fodder for his concert tours.) He spent several years in Paris, then the center of up-to-date music in Europe.

But the period of his life that was most stable and secure came when he settled in Madrid in 1769; he soon entered the service of the Infante Don Luis, younger brother of Charles III, who insisted that Boccherini compose only for him. During these years in the household service of the Spanish royal family, Boccherini composed mostly string quartets and quintets (he eventually composed about 100 of each, and more than 100 of other types of chamber music).

The G major concerto is cast in the standard three movements. The opening movement is rich in thematic variety. The ritornello for the orchestra already introduces several tunes, each floating a gracious and elegant character. The soloist's entry emphasizes the tenor register, an unusually mellow sonority. As befits expectations in a concerto, the soloist soon begins tossing off rapid triplets that make the instrument stand out from the more subdued orchestra.

After the bustling and showy G-major first movement, the dark expressiveness of G minor lends its effect to the poignant slow movement, the heart of the concerto. The repeated notes of the orchestra suggest a slow processional, against which the soloist sings a plaintive, sustained lament.

The finale, *Rondo quasi Menuetto*, evokes the courtly elegance of the day; it is by far the shortest movement in the concerto, a fairly lively chaser to the sustained long phrases of the slow movement.

CARL PHILIPP EMANUEL BACH

Concerto in A major for cello and orchestra, W.172 (Helm 439)

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach was born in Weimar, Germany, on March 8, 1714, and died in Hamburg on December 14, 1788. The date of the concerto in A minor for cello and orchestra seems to be 1753, but details are lacking. Circumstances of its first performance are unknown. What is known is that Bach made versions for solo cello, solo flute, and solo harpsichord. In addition to the solo cello, the orchestra required consists only of strings and continuo.

Emanuel, as he was known to the family, was the second surviving son of Johann Sebastian Bach. He was, after his father, the most prolific and significant member of the Bach

family. He spent nearly thirty years of his life in the service of the music-loving king Frederick the Great, who was a rather good flute player and a fair composer himself. The chief disadvantage to this position was the occasional interruptions in the musical life of the court during Frederick's military involvements, especially during the Seven Years War, 1756-1763. Moreover, Frederick's conservative musical taste better suited the work of Emanuel's father, whom Frederick greatly admired. But to the son, a composer of far more modern vintage, the king's conservatism was perhaps an irksome restraint on his imagination.

Yet even in the realm of the conservative realm of the concerto, Emanuel Bach's "advanced" style is occasionally evident in the careful attention to expressive dynamics and the flexibility in the textures. The A major concerto exists in no fewer than three versions--for cello, flute, and harpsichord. Like his father, he was supremely practical about recasting an existing score for another musical purpose. A catalogue of the composer's estate offers the date 1750 for all three concertos, but since the list was prepared decades later, after his death, the evidence it provides is scarcely overwhelming. The composer's autograph manuscript for the cello version survives, and that one seems to be the original form of the piece.

The orchestral ritornello that begins a Baroque or Classical concerto normally presents the principal material of the musical discourse. Here, though, the ritornello contains not just one thematic idea (as would have been the case in the older Vivaldi concertos) but a whole string of varied and contrasting figures in different melodic shapes and different rhythms. None of them simply foreshadows the solo part, or even hints very closely at its content. The result is clearly a major step along the path toward the concerto of the high Classical period as exemplified by Mozart.

The slow movement, with its many gradations of rhythmic articulation between "straight" notes and triplets, even and dotted notes, gives ample room for the soloist to display the quality of "Empfindsamkeit"--literally, "feelingness"--in varied expressive performance of which C.P.E. Bach himself was a master.

The finale, rather like the opening movement, begins with an extended ritornello full of musical ideas including two strongly contrasting figures that suggest again the shaping forces that will lead to the classical sonata form. The movement is filled with varied patterns of sharply marked rhythms that seem almost dancelike, suggesting perhaps the gavotte as a basic gesture for the brilliant elaboration of this finale.

JOSEPH HAYDN

Symphony No. 67 in F major

The symphony conventionally numbered 67 seems to have been composed about 1775 or 1776, and it would certainly have been performed almost at once at Eszterháza; the work was published in 1779. The score calls for oboes, bassoons, and horns in pairs plus strings and basso continuo.

There is scarcely an orchestral device or a formal surprise that cannot be found somewhere in Haydn's work. Symphony No. 67 is an extraordinarily rich example of the

overflowing wellsprings of his imagination, with both formal ingenuities and striking ideas of instrumentation, while still full of that bubbling good humor that is so often a hallmark of his style, yet not neglecting touchingly expressive passages either.

The opening movement is in a rollicking 6/8 meter, unusual for a symphonic first movement; it was normally reserved for the lighter finale of a symphony (when Haydn used 6/8 for the first movement of his "Clock" Symphony, No. 101, nearly twenty years later, it was preceded by a slow, weighty introduction). The first theme bounces along in sunny mood in staccato eighth notes quietly in the strings alone, with the lightest possible texture. The full orchestra enters to begin the modulation to the new key in a stormier mood, with hints of the minor mode, before the clouds part. Oboes and violins present the secondary theme, still flowing in eighth-notes, but now played legato. The extended development section plays with variations of texture, bits of contrapuntal imitation, and effective chromatic touches to set off the return to the recapitulation. The 6/8 meter would imply outdoorsy music, perhaps the hunt (represented in the 18th century by the horns); yet Haydn does not allow this reference to flower before the last phrase of the entire movement, when the horns finally come into their own with a "hunting" theme that we've heard in the strings all the way through.

The first bars of the Adagio provide a wonderful foil for the energy of the first movement. Haydn's theme makes effective use of silence within the phrase. This is the beginning of a full sonata-form movement, of which the second theme is a sustained, lyric melody in the oboes over a running figure in the violins. The development begins with strings alone, eventually reduced to the two violin sections playing a little game of imitative counterpoint; the wind instruments return to prepare for the recapitulation. This begins even more softly than at the opening of the movement. At the very end the winds punctuate what appears to be a final close, though the strings demur and insist on beginning the opening theme all over again. But just as they seem to suggest that we will hear the movement through once more, Haydn directs them to play "*col legno d'arco*" ("with the wood [on the back] of the bow") an extraordinary coloristic effect, and this phrase closes the movement.

The main section of the Menuetto is built on a theme closely related to that of the opening movement, outlining the main triad of the basic harmony with a series of repeated notes, then a move away and a move back. The Trio is one of the most astonishing such passages in any Haydn symphony. In the second movement, Haydn had highlighted the first and second violins as a group. Here two solo violins, both muted, perform the entire Trio! The first violin plays a country-dance sort of tune entirely (as the composer specifies) on a single string, the violin's top E-string. Meanwhile the second violin has had to tune the bottom G-string down a step to F, which serves as a drone for the entire passage, while also playing an inner part on another string. In all 104 Haydn symphonies, there is hardly another passage as surprising as this.

More surprises lie ahead. The finale begins with a robust theme filled with energetic flashes of unison arpeggios in the strings, followed by a modulation to the dominant and a sturdy cadence therein, leading us to expect a new theme. Sure enough, it comes as expected, but *pianissimo*, building to a strong close at the end of the exposition. So far, everything is quite in

order. But instead of a dramatic development section based on these two themes, tossing them back and forth, playing harmonic or orchestral tricks with them, Haydn fills the whole center of the movement with another piece entirely. Shifting gears dramatically from the cut time of the opening, he begins a gentle, lyrically evocative passage in 3/8 time, *Adagio e cantabile* for string trio (two violins and cello). Once again he highlights solo members of the orchestra for an extended passage. This movement is probably reworked from an overture written for some theatrical performance at Eszterháza, since it was very common to insert a contrasting, slower movement into the body of an overture, a practice carried over from overtures in many Italian operas of the late Baroque era. This central passage is not complete in itself; it ends poised on the dominant, awaiting conclusion, and that conclusion is nothing other than the recapitulation of the *Allegro di molto*, which brings Haydn's gloriously original symphony to its end, with one final unusual touch – a long, written-out trill in the first violins, running for eight measures as the other instruments offer brief closing gestures.

It is worth recalling, when we encounter a symphony with so many unusual touches as this one, that Haydn's orchestra at Eszterháza performed before a highly musical prince and his court, and guests (many of whom, at least, were also very musical), *without* the benefit of printed programs and program notes. They had no advance warning of Haydn's surprises; the composer simply expected his listeners to follow the music based on their familiarity with what was becoming standard practice in the creation of symphonies and respond appropriately when he set up expectations and then purposely smashed them for humorous or expressive effect. One can only imagine the prince's face as one delicious Haydnesque surprise after another made itself apparent to the delighted patron.

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