

Serenade in D major, K.250, “Haffner”

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Born

January 27, 1756, in Salzburg, Austria

Died

December 5, 1791, in Vienna

Work composed

July 1776, in Salzburg

World premiere

July 21, 1776, at the Salzburg home of the Haffner family

New York Philharmonic premiere

February 18, 1923, Bruno Walter conducting the New York Symphony (which merged with the New York Philharmonic in 1928 to form today's New York Philharmonic)

Most recent New York Philharmonic performance

December 17, 1991, Erich Leinsdorf, conductor, Glenn Dicterow, soloist

Estimated duration

ca. 51 minutes

anything Mozart composed could be depended on to exhibit fine craftsmanship. A few of the pieces that he produced for these occasions rank as true masterpieces of their genres, including the *Haffner* Serenade (K.250); the *Posthorn* Serenade (K.320); and the Wind Serenades in B-flat major (K.361, the *Gran Partita*) and C minor (K.388, later transformed into a string quintet).

Outdoor music-making was a passion of Austrians in the 17th and 18th centuries; a plethora of accounts suggests that the summer breezes were frequently filled with musical notes. During the years when he was growing up in Salzburg, Mozart produced an impressive catalogue of “incidental” orchestral pieces for string, wind, or mixed ensembles. After he moved to Vienna in 1781 such works all but disappeared from his catalogue. There are a few notable exceptions — his G-major Serenade *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* and the supernal Divertimento for String Trio in E-flat major date from his later years — but on the whole Mozart’s serenades fed the tastes and needs of his native Salzburg.

The Haffner family was one of the most prominent in that city. To this day visitors to Salzburg are reminded of them thanks to the Sigmund-Haffner-Gasse, which intersects with the Getreidegasse not many steps down from the home in which Mozart was born. Sigmund (or Siegmund) Haffner was a very successful businessman involved in import-export, transport, and banking. From 1768 until his death in 1772 he served as the mayor of Salzburg. He married twice — his first wife died quite young — and he fathered five daughters and a son who survived to adulthood. The son, also named Sigmund, was an almost exact contemporary of Mozart’s, having been born nine

Divertimentos, serenades, cassations, and nocturnes flowed fluently from Mozart’s pen as often as they were required to serve as background music for indoor or outdoor dinners, wedding receptions, birthday parties, graduation celebrations, and any number of other private or civic gatherings. Many of these compositions might fairly be considered to be thoroughly pleasant but eminently forgettable; others, however, boast content that is as serious as that which is expected from a symphony. In any case,

months after the composer and, tragically, predeceasing him by four and a half years. Notwithstanding the societal difference that separated them (the Mozarts were solidly middle-class), the Haffners and the Mozarts seem to have enjoyed a considerable degree of real friendship.

On July 22, 1776, one of the Haffner daughters, Marie Elisabeth, was married to Franz Xaver Späth, the scion of another mercantile family. Since her father had by then died, her brother, Sigmund Haffner the Younger, oversaw the wedding arrangements. He commissioned his friend Mozart to write a serenade that could be used in the course of the festivities, which led to the creation of the piece played here.

Mozart's father, Leopold, proudly memorialized the occasion through an inscription at the head of his son's manuscript, in "high-culture" Italian: "Serenata per lo sposalitio del Sgr: Spath colla Sgra Elisabetta Haffner der Sgr: Caval: Amadeo Wolfg: Mozart." The piece was first played the evening before the wedding at a summerhouse in the garden of the family's residence on Paris-Lodrongasse, near the

Mirabell Garden, a very short stroll from the Tanzermeisterhaus to which the Mozarts had moved in 1773.

It was apparently an opulent affair, and Mozart went the extra mile with his contribution, composing a serenade that exceeded any piece of occasional music he had previously written by a considerable measure. With its eight movements one could consider the *Haffner* Serenade to be a sort of "double symphony." (It would be even more than that if you counted the genial D-major March, K.249, that Mozart also provided for the occasion, a movement that is sometimes offered as a prelude to the Serenade proper.) Yet it would probably be more accurate to characterize the *Haffner* Serenade not so much as a double symphony, but rather as a symphony and a violin concerto rolled into one, since the second, third, and fourth movements feature that instrument in a solo role – doubtless executed by the composer himself at the Haffners' celebration.

Instrumentation: pairs of flutes, oboes, bassoons, horns, and trumpets, as well as strings, in addition to the solo violin.

Serenade vs. Symphony

It is apparent that Mozart held his *Haffner* Serenade in high esteem, as he conducted it on several occasions following its premiere, with two such performances documented in 1777 and 1779. This was unusual, since at that time occasional music was very often heard only once and then consigned to the attic. In fact, Mozart also adapted this score into a symphony, incorporating numerous changes in the composition and the orchestration. This "symphony adaptation" of the *Haffner* Serenade is not to be confused with the famous *Haffner* Symphony (K.385), which is an entirely different piece. The *Haffner* Symphony (a.k.a. Symphony No. 35, which the Philharmonic performed January 26–28, 2006) was composed six years later, in the summer of 1782, after Mozart had moved from Salzburg to Vienna; he wrote it to celebrate the elevation of Sigmund Haffner the Younger to the minor nobility.



Mozart at age 24