

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Born January 27, 1756 in Salzburg; died December 5, 1791 in Vienna

Concerto No. 5 in A major for Violin and Orchestra, K. 219, "Turkish" (1775)

PREMIERE OF WORK: Salzburg, December 1775

Salzburg Court Orchestra

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, soloist

APPROXIMATE DURATION: 31 minutes

INSTRUMENTATION: two oboes, two horns and strings

Mozart's five authentic Violin Concertos were all products of a single year — 1775. At nineteen he was already a veteran of five years experience as concertmaster of the archiepiscopal court in Salzburg, for which his duties included not only playing, but also composing, acting as co-conductor with the keyboard player (modern orchestral conducting was not to originate for at least two more decades) and soloing in concertos. It was for this last function that Mozart wrote these concertos. He was, of course, a quick study at everything that he did, and each of these works builds on the knowledge gained from its predecessors. It was with the last three (K. 216, 218, 219) that something more than simple experience emerged, however, because it was with these compositions that Mozart indisputably entered the era of his musical maturity. These are his earliest pieces now regularly heard in the concert hall, and the last one, No. 5 in A major, is the greatest of the set. A. Hyatt King wrote that this is not only the best of Mozart's concertos for violin, "but has no rival throughout the second half of the 18th century."

The opening movement is in sonata-concerto form, but has some curious structural experiments more usually associated with the music of Haydn than with that of Mozart. After the initial presentation of the thematic material by the orchestra, the soloist is introduced with the surprising device of a brief, stately *Adagio*, a technique perhaps derived from the D major Clavier Concerto of C.P.E. Bach, Johann Sebastian's musically adventurous Son No. 2. When the *Allegro* tempo resumes, the soloist plays not the main theme already announced by the ensemble, but a new lyrical melody for which the original main theme becomes the accompaniment. More new material fills the remainder of the exposition. The development section is invested with passages of dark harmonic color that cast expressive shadows across the generally sunny landscape of the movement, and lend it emotional weight. The recapitulation calls for restrained, elegant virtuosity from the soloist.

The second movement is a graceful song in sonatina form (sonata-allegro without development). The final movement is an extended rondo in the style and rhythm of a minuet. It is from one of the episodes separating the returns of the theme that the work acquired its sobriquet, "Turkish." This passage occurs before the theme is heard for the last time, and stands in surprising contrast to its elegant surroundings by changing its tempo, meter and mood to recreate a vivacious contradance in the style popular at the time in the dance halls of Vienna. A number of short tunes comprise this section. Most are, according to A. Hyatt King, derived from Hungarian folk music (known, vaguely, as "Turkish" in the 18th century), though one was part of a ballet titled *Harem Jealousies* that Mozart borrowed from his opera *Lucio Silla* of 1772. After the wonderful clangor of this episode, which even calls for the basses to strike their strings with the wood of the bow, the return of the minuet theme is guaranteed to bring a smile — as though the dancers had collapsed from exertion and had only enough strength left for something slow and easy. The end of the work is quiet, and wistful, and unforgettable.