Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791): ***Serenata Notturna*** **in D major, K. 239 (1776)**

1. Marcia
2. Minuet and Trio
3. Rondo

Composed in January 1776 during Mozart's tenure at the Salzburg court, the *Serenata Notturna* provides a good example of the 18th-century genre of the serenade. In Mozart's day, serenades were not intended for the concert hall but for social occasions- outdoor performances, weddings, name days, or university ceremonies. Originating from the Italian 'serenata', the term implies an evening performance ('sereno' meaning 'calm' or 'evening' in Italian).

Serenades were usually light in tone and entertaining in character, though that's not to say that the form prohibited lyricism or contrapuntal interest. In the Classical period, particularly in Austria and Southern Germany, serenades overlapped with similar genres such as the *divertimento* and *cassation*, often used interchangeably. They were typically structured in five to seven short movements, often including multiple minuets and a mixture of fast and slow tempos. Although Mozart wrote several such pieces in Salzburg, the current work has a number of features that are of interest.

The *Serenata Notturna* breaks from convention in its scoring: it is written for two distinct ensembles—a solo string quartet (two violins, viola, and double bass) and a ripieno group consisting of a string orchestra with timpani. This separation of forces evokes the Baroque concerto grosso model, where a small group of soloists (the concertino) contrasts with the full ensemble (the ripieno). Here, however, Mozart uses the dialogue between the groups more playfully, showcasing his ingenuity and humor.

The work opens with a bold and ceremonious *Marcia*, suggestive of an entrance or a regal procession. An almost militaristic edge is provided by the timpani. The music alternates between assertive tutti passages and lighter, more ornamental exchanges in the solo group. The movement has an almost theatrical flair, with sudden pauses and fanfare-like gestures creating a sense of controlled grandeur.

In the central *Minuet* movement, Mozart subverts expectations with surprising rhythmic accents and off-beat emphases, lending a slightly rustic and humourous character to the dance. In the *Trio*, he reduces the texture down to the solo group alone, allowing for more intimate phrasing

and expressive nuance. The contrast between the polished minuet and the rougher, more improvisatory-sounding trio adds to the movement's charm and elegance.

The final movement is a lively *rondo* that displays Mozart's characteristic wit and inventiveness. The main theme, first played by the solo quartet, is buoyant and is restated between contrasting episodes. Mozart plays with his audience's expectations here with false starts, sudden silences, and exaggerated dynamic shifts. Despite its light-heartedness, the movement also contains brief episodes of lyrical beauty, showcasing the young composer's command of expressive contrast.

Although less well-known than some of Mozart's later serenades—such as the ever-popular *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*—the *Serenata Notturna* is no less accomplished. It is a striking example of Mozart's early genius (he was 19 when it was composed), combining the social function of 18th-century court music with a spirit of experimentation, humour, and sophistication.

Joseph Haydn (1732-1808): **Oboe Concerto in C major Hob.VIIg:C1 (1790)**

1. Allegro spirituoso
2. Andante
3. Rondo: Allegretto

When Anthony van Hoboken was cataloguing Haydn's complete works in the 1950s he included this charming concerto but many modern musicologists do not think he actually wrote the work. Lesley and I are inclined to agree with them, as it has certain characteristics that are not particularly associated with Haydn, such as the long crescendos that feature in the first movement and even the size and structure of the first movement itself, not to mention the fulsome orchestration including militaristic trumpets and timpani.

No matter, as there is not a huge number of well-known oboe concertos in existence and so it is good to have such a work to showcase the instrument. The sizeable first movement features a

substantial orchestral exposition before the soloist enters. There are a good few opportunities for the soloist to shine in solo cadenzas. The slower second movement is graceful and lyrical while the third movement is a cheerful rondo movement, featuring a contrasting minor key section.

(Programme note by Peter Marks)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791): **Serenade No. 13 in G major, K. 525 "Eine kleine Nachtmusik" (1787)**

1. Allegro
2. Andante
3. Minuet and Trio
4. Rondo

Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* is undoubtedly one of his most popular works; it is also another fine example of the *serenade*. Composed in Vienna on August 10, 1787, and catalogued by Mozart with the title 'Eine kleine Nacht-Musik' (A Little Night Music), the work stands out for its elegance and clarity. The precise impetus for composition is uncertain- the work doesn't appear to have resulted from a commission; nor was it published in Mozart's lifetime.

Composed during the same period as *Don Giovanni*, *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* shows Mozart at his most concise and refined. Though likely intended for a private performance or amateur ensemble, its craftsmanship suggests it was more than a casual exercise. Mozart originally listed the work as having five movements; the missing movement (possibly another minuet) remains lost.

The *allegro* first movement is among the most iconic in all of classical music. It features a buoyant opening theme that could be seen to incorporate an example of the 'Mannheim Rocket' (an ascending flourish that is one of the compositional tools of the Mannheim School- see also Mozart's C-minor Piano Sonata and the final movement of the Symphony no. 40). The second subject is more lyrical, and the development, though brief, shows Mozart's inventive use of motivic fragments and modulation. The recapitulation returns cleanly, reaffirming Classical balance and proportion.

The second movement *andante* begins with a gracious melody over a simple accompaniment, evoking the intimacy of a string quartet. The contrasting central section introduces more chromaticism, minor inflections, and rhythmic agitation. As was standard with movements of this nature, the return of the opening section is slightly embellished.

A minuet and trio provides the form of the third movement. The minuet is stately and rhythmically firm, marked by prominent sforzandi and angular phrasing (not quite the courtly dance that we would expect). The contrasting trio offers a smoother, more flowing melody.

The final movement (rondo) is light and brisk, with an infectious theme that reappears between contrasting episodes. The rondo structure (ABACA) allows for variety within repetition, and Mozart's clever harmonic detours, syncopations, and interplay between voices provide interest throughout.

Posthumously published in 1827 by Johann André, the work gained enormous popularity in the 19th century as tastes shifted toward clarity and elegance.

Giuseppe Tartini (1692-1770) arr. Gordon Jacob: Concertino for Clarinet and Strings (1945)

1. Grave
2. Allegro molto
3. Adagio
4. Allegro risoluto

Giuseppe Tartini was an Italian composer and violinist. This Concertino for Clarinet and String Orchestra is an arrangement of material from his violin sonatas, made by Gordon Jacob (1895-1984), an English composer and conductor. In Gordon Jacob's own words:

"The clarinet, compared with the flute, oboe and bassoon, is a modern instrument and therefore little or no music written before the time of Mozart exists for it. This is a misfortune, for it means that a golden age of music, which included Handel and Bach and a host of lesser, but admirable composers, has hitherto been a closed book to clarinettists.

This little work is a free arrangement of movements taken from two of Tartini's sonatas for violin."

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
Symphony No. 92 in G major, "Oxford" (1789)

1. Adagio-Allegro spiritoso
2. Adagio
3. Minuet and Trio
4. Presto

In 1791, during his first visit to England, Haydn was awarded an honorary Doctor of Music degree from Oxford University. As part of the festivities, he conducted a performance of a new symphony at the Sheldonian Theatre. Thus, while his ninety-second symphony was not strictly composed for the city of Oxford or for its University, it will forever be associated with it.

By the time of this work's composition, Haydn was at the peak of his fame and creative powers. After much time spent as Kapellmeister to the Esterházy family, during which he had composed numerous symphonies, operas, and chamber works, Haydn found himself internationally renowned. The relative isolation of the Esterházy court had allowed him to experiment and innovate freely- indeed, he once remarked that 'there was no one near to confuse me, so I was forced to become original'.

The symphony was, in fact, composed in 1789, two years before his Oxford visit, as part of a commission from the French Count d'Ogny for the Concert de la Loge Olympique in Paris. It is one of a trio of symphonies (Nos. 90–92) written for this purpose. These works demonstrate Haydn's mastery of the classical form.

The symphony opens with an *Adagio* introduction, which sets the tone for the lively *Allegro spiritoso* that follows. Haydn's command of form is evident in his seamless transitions, rhythmic playfulness, and subtle use of counterpoint. The second movement, *Adagio*, offers a deeply expressive contrast, featuring lyrical themes and intricate harmonic development, qualities that may have surprised the Oxford audience expecting a more ceremonial and reverential tone.

If the term 'Haydnesque' could be defined in music, then the third movement Minuet and Trio would provide a prime example. Blending courtly elegance and rustic energy the music revels in metrical playfulness

(a game of ‘spot the downbeat’ could provide an entertaining diversion here). The final movement, marked *Presto*, is likewise a tour de force of rhythmic vitality and contrapuntal invention. Haydn’s characteristic wit surfaces here, as he plays with listener expectations through unexpected accents, pauses, and fugal elements that resonate with the academic setting of its famous performance even if we know that it was written two years previously.

Symphony No. 92 represents a pivotal moment in Haydn’s career: it combines the fruits of his years at Esterházy with the broader recognition and opportunity that came from his travels to London. It also prefigures the boldness and grandeur of his final set of twelve symphonies (the ‘London’ symphonies), cementing his legacy as the father of the Classical symphony.