

Trumpet Concerto in E-flat major, H. VIIe:1

Composed in 1796

Franz Joseph Haydn

Born in Rohrau, Lower Austria, March 31, 1732

Died in Vienna, May 31, 1809

Haydn's Trumpet Concerto was first performed by The Philadelphia Orchestra on a Student Concert in March 1962; Wilmer Wise was the soloist, and senior student audition winner, and William Smith conducted. The first subscription performances were with Gilbert Johnson and Eugene Ormandy, in October 1967. Most recently it was performed at the Mann Center in July 1984, with Wynton Marsalis and Charles Dutoit.

The Orchestra recorded the Concerto in 1967 for CBS, with Johnson and Ormandy (currently available on Sony Classical's Essential Classics, #SBK 62649).

The Concerto runs approximately 15 minutes in performance and is scored for an orchestra of two flutes, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings, in addition to the solo trumpet.

Composers such as Bach, Handel, and Vivaldi used the trumpet to brilliant effect in the Baroque era, both as a prominent member of large instrumental and choral ensembles (consider the limited but spectacular trumpet moments in *Messiah*) and as featured soloist in a concerto grosso (Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 is probably the most famous example). And although concertos for the instrument have become relatively rare in the last two hundred years, Romantic and 20th-century composers integrated trumpets into orchestral works as a mainstay of the brass section. The trumpet played a more modest role in the Classical era, largely due to the instrument's limitations: It could play only a select number of notes. Certain symphonies in certain keys—like Haydn's in C major that opened this concert—punctuated important structural moments with trumpet flourishes and concluded with triumphant fanfares, but the instrument otherwise was omitted entirely or its presence restricted to supporting the harmony.

NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR THE TRUMPET

The problem was that trumpets could only play a limited number of notes in a given key—if the music modulated to a distant key, the trumpeter would have to have another instrument on hand tuned to that key. Even within a given key, only certain notes could be produced by lip position and breath pressure. These problems would largely be solved in 1813 with introduction of the valve trumpet, an instrument that could produce many notes. Haydn's Concerto in E-flat came about in response to an interim solution, a keyed trumpet invented by Anton Weidinger (1767-1852) in the early 1790s. Weidinger was a celebrated trumpeter in the Vienna Court Orchestra, as well as a friend and great admirer of Haydn. His concerts often featured Haydn's music and around 1796, upon Haydn's return from London, he requested a Trumpet Concerto. The work waited four years for its premiere, on March 28, 1800, perhaps because Weidinger was still working the kinks out in the instrument. An announcement of the concert stated, "Weidinger's intention on this occasion is to present to the world for the first time, so that it may be judged, an organized trumpet that he has invented and brought—after seven years of hard and

expensive labor—to what he believes may be described as perfection. It contains several keys and will be displaced in a concerto specially written for this instrument by Herr Joseph Haydn, Doctor of Music.”

Haydn clearly reveled in new possibilities of the trumpet. There are passages in which he fully exploits the chromatic scale, the melody slithering up or down by half steps. And yet there are indications that the new instrument lacked the brilliance we associate with the trumpet. A Viennese report at the time noted:

The Court trumpeter Weidinger invented a keyed trumpet, on which all the half notes can be produced very purely and with certainty over a range of two octaves. Really an important improvement; but it appears that through using the keys, the trumpet’s tone loses something of its characteristic and prominent strength, and approaches more closely the tone of a strong oboe.

OBSCURITY AND FAME

After its premiere in 1800 the Concerto disappeared for more than a century. Some of Haydn’s other concertos are lost entirely and so it is fortunate that this one survived in its original manuscript source. In 1929 a Belgian publisher released the piece for the first time, arranged for trumpet and piano. A first recording on 78s in the mid 1930s, incomplete as it only included the second and third movements, put the piece on the map and sold remarkably well. Since then, as the preeminent Haydn scholar H.C. Robbins Landon observes, it has undoubtedly become “Haydn’s most popular concerto (and probably his most popular work nowadays).”

In the initial **Allegro**, Haydn gives the soloist time to “warm up” by having the soloist play along at times in the opening orchestral section. There is a point near the end where a cadenza can be inserted. Haydn provided none and tonight Mr. Bilger plays his own. The **Andante** is more intimate, lacking horns, trumpets, and timpani. The melody is somewhat similar to the Austrian National Anthem (“Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser”), from the “Emperor” Quartet, Op. 76, No. 3, he would write the following year. The Finale (**Allegro**) wins high praise from the authoritative Landon, who thinks the piece Haydn’s “best” concerto: “The third movement is without any question one of the most fascinating, scintillating, and formally brilliant rondos that Haydn ever composed—and he wrote upwards of one hundred which could compete in such a contest.”

—Christopher H. Gibbs

PARALLEL EVENTS 1796

MUSIC: Beethoven, *Ah! perfido*; Cherubini, *Médée*; Cimarosa, *Gli Orazi ed i Curiazi*

LITERATURE: Burney, *Camilla*; Morton, *The Way to Get Married*; Wordsworth, *The Borderers*

ART: Goya, *Los Caprichos*; Savage, *The Washington Family*; David, *The Sabine Women*

HISTORY & SCIENCE: Napoleon marries Josephine; Freedom of press in France; Jenner introduces vaccination against smallpox