

BASSOON CONCERTO IN B FLAT MAJOR K191

- W.A. MOZART -

Mozart's passion for wind instruments is apparent throughout his writing – his masses and sacred works feature dramatic and emotional solo lines as well as tutti passages that add a depth to the work, whilst his operas use wind parts to join the singers as equal partners in the performance. However, if these works show his talent for writing, few come close to the Bassoon Concerto in exploring truly idiomatic writing and a joy for an instrument so often overlooked in the orchestra.

Though the original manuscript has been lost to history, we are left a printed edition from 1790, which is likely to reflect accurately the score as Mozart himself left it. Alfred Einstein, the musicologist responsible for re-editing the Köchel catalogue of Mozart's work, labeled the Bassoon concerto as a "a work unmistakably conceived for a wind instrument, a real bassoon concerto", continuing to describe solo phrases "full of leaps, runs and singing passages completely suited to the instrument". As the piece progresses we feel the relationship between soloist and orchestra grow in humour – much nearer a true partnership than some of Mozart's concerti.

The initial statement of the theme in the first movement is a straightforward melody – the next is a virtuosic display of trills, rapid tonguing, fast scalar and melismatic passages and leaps from high to low. In the second movement, we see racing phrases give way to a delicate melodic beauty which explores just how sensitive the tone of this instrument can be. The third and final movement sees the orchestra create the framework upon which the bassoon is free to dance with exhilarating and dramatic variations – triplets and semi-quavers allowing the soloist to race the orchestra through each subject.

Mozart's emphasis on strong and weak beats, four bar phrases and rhythmic and melodic contrast combined with the beauty of such a worth instrument combine to create a truly exciting and dynamic concerto – the first he wrote for any wind instrument.

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