

# CONCERTO IN B FLAT MAJOR FOR VIOLIN KV 207

- W.A. MOZART -

The two years between 1773 and 1775 saw Mozart compose five concerti for violin and orchestra, as well as some single movement works for the same scoring. This output, which is some of his most charming and challenging, has its origin in both his visit to Salzburg where he was employed as concertmaster (or orchestral leader) in the service of the Prince-Archbishop, and in finally having the time to reflect on all that he had learnt and developed by way of compositional skill during his recent journey to Italy and three-month stay in Vienna during 1773.

During this period he was regularly appearing as a soloist on the violin, and this undoubtedly improved his relationship with the instrument – he was critical of orchestral players in Augsburg for their lack of dedication and technique, instead preferring the less accomplished but more focused playing of the local monks. Though never as comfortable on the violin as at the harpsichord or fortepiano, we know that Mozart performed the concerti himself, and we see his humour reflected in them, much as the horn concerti written for his dear friend Joseph Leutgeb contain frequent 'in-jokes' between the two men. Whilst these are all valid reasons for their composition, we see neither a specific first performer, nor commissioner and so might suppose that Mozart was looking for personal entertainment and adding to his portfolio, seeking alternative and better-paid employment in the future. Whilst Mozart's violin concerti share the three-movement plan devised by Antonio Vivaldi for such works, they each display a level of individuality. The works take elements from Italian, French and Bohemian violin music and reflect these styles.

The concerti were received well in Salzburg, a city alive with passion for such pieces at that point in time and there was high standard of performance both in professional and amateur circles. Acclaimed violinist Antonio Brunetti, director of music at the Court in Salzburg, seems to have offered Mozart some constructive improvements on the pieces which were incorporated – one of the few examples of Mozart's autograph scores showing amendments before he issued them.

The first of the violin concerti, that which has come down to us as KV207 was initially, like the other works, assumed to have been completed in 1775 but Wolfgang Plath and Alan Tyson, in their study of both calligraphy and paper types, suggest that KV207 instead dates clearly from 1773, with the dates altered initially to 1775, then to 1780 and finally back to 1775 – perhaps to aid their later sale to a commissioner. We know that Mozart, like many composers of the era, reused his own work and it is entirely believable he would pass these off as new pieces. It is however, and unlike many works dating from the same period of his output, without a shadow of doubt that we say it is his work, and that he performed them in both concert and private recital.

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