

Symphony No. 35 in D major, K. 385, “Haffner”  
Wolfgang Amadè Mozart  
*Born in Salzburg, January 27, 1756; died in Vienna, December 5, 1791*

Owing to the detailed correspondence with his father, more is known about the circumstances surrounding Mozart’s *Haffner* Symphony than any of his other symphonies. Writing from Salzburg in mid-July 1782, Leopold requested a symphony (serenade) from his son for the ennoblement festivities of Sigmund Haffner, Jr., a childhood friend of Mozart. (Six years earlier Mozart had composed the eight-movement *Haffner* Serenade for the wedding of Sigmund’s sister Elisabeth.) Mozart’s life in Vienna was particularly frantic at this time—conducting his new opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, making saleable arrangements from the opera before anyone else could, completing other commissions, and preparing to move in anticipation of his upcoming marriage.

With all these pressures in addition to Mozart’s tendency to procrastinate, the requested symphony—actually a five-movement serenade, plus an introductory march—took Mozart longer to complete than usual. He sent it in several installments to his father, the last of which, sent on August 7, was the additional March (probably K. 385a [K.408, no. 2]). The ennoblement had taken place on July 29 and though the date of the festivities is unknown, it is entirely possible the Symphony did not arrive in time. Whether he heard the work or simply studied the score, Leopold’s approval is reflected in his son’s August 24 acknowledgment: “I am delighted that the Symphony is to your taste.”

In December and January Mozart wrote to his father several times requesting the return of the Symphony-Serenade so he could perform it on his concert on Sunday, March 23, 1783. Upon receipt of the work in February, he wrote back, “My new Haffner symphony has positively amazed me, for I had forgotten every single note of it. It must surely produce a good effect.”

In order to adapt the piece for the concert hall, Mozart had to do relatively little, suggesting that he anticipated its later use as a symphony. The ease of the adaptation also reflects the blurring of distinction between the genres of serenade and symphony. He pared the work down to the typical four movements by leaving out the March and one of the two minuets that had framed the Andante. (The jettisoned minuet is presumed lost.) He also added pairs of flutes and clarinets to the first and last movements and deleted the repeats in the first movement.

The grand unison opening theme of the first movement with its imposing octave leaps reflects the pomp of the occasion for which the work had originally been written. This theme dominates the movement in overt recurrences and in imaginative yet recognizable derivatives. In the August 7 letter to his father, Mozart directed that this movement “must be played with great fire.”

In addition to retaining its initial scoring without flutes and clarinets, the graceful Andante shows its serenade origins in its charming ornamentation and the binary proportions of the sonata form. The Minuet provides a prime example of the typical contrasted pair of dances in Classic instrumental music: an active minuet followed by a pastoral trio. The contrast is emphasized in this case by the bold arpeggios of the minuet theme and the lilting stepwise motion of the trio’s theme.

Several commentators have pointed out the similarity of the main theme of the finale to Osmin’s buffo aria of malicious triumph “Ha! wie will ich triumphieren” from *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, which Mozart had just completed. Some even suggest that Mozart was sending a sort of personal message to people in his native Salzburg, which he had been happy to leave. According to the August 7 letter, Mozart wanted this movement of wit and comic touches to be played “as fast as possible.”

Mozart's March 23 concert opened with the first three movements of the *Haffner* Symphony and closed with the last movement. Other recent works of his were performed in between, including several vocal pieces, two piano concertos, another short symphony, and a number of solo piano pieces! Mozart's report that the concert was an outstanding success with the Emperor and the larger-than-usual audience, was echoed by the *Magazin der Musik*, Hamburg: "Our Monarch, who, against his habit, attended the whole of the concert, as well as the entire audience, accorded him [Mozart] such animated applause as has never been heard of here."

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