

Violin Concerto No. 5 in A Major, K. 219, "Turkish"

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born: Salzburg, Austria, January 27, 1756

Died: Vienna, Austria, December 5, 1791

There is no record of when or where this concerto was first performed, although as discussed below, it may well have been played in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's native Salzburg with Gaetano Brunetti executing the solo part. Mozart scored this work for solo violin and an orchestra of two oboes, two horns and strings. (Duration: 29 minutes.)

Between April and December of 1775, Mozart wrote five concertos for solo violin and orchestra. The Violin Concerto in A Major, K. 219, the last piece in this series, may have been fashioned for Gaetano Brunetti, a violinist who shared with Mozart the duties of concertmaster in the orchestra maintained by the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg. Ironically, the evidence that Mozart intended this concerto for Brunetti stems from the fact that the latter deemed its second movement "too studied," as Leopold Mozart delicately put it to his son, and requested that it be rewritten. Mozart, apparently without complaint, fashioned a new Adagio to replace the one his colleague found deficient. The original slow movement has since been restored to the concerto. (The substitute leads an independent life as the Adagio in E Major for Violin and Orchestra, K. 261.)

The first movement of the A Major Concerto begins with the usual orchestral exposition, one whose several brief themes convey an almost operatic *élan*. But the entrance of the solo violin changes the music's character completely. Indeed, the featured instrument seems to have stumbled into the wrong composition, rhapsodizing in slow tempo over a murmuring accompaniment. Mozart once again shifts gears and returns to the original tempo, allowing the movement to develop more or less as we might expect.

The ensuing Adagio is more conventional, being concerned chiefly with the subject given out by the orchestra in the opening measures. But the finale, a rondo-form movement using a minuet melody as its recurring principal theme, has as its third episode a humorous interlude in "Turkish" style. Musical evocation of the land of the Pashas constituted a popular strain of composition among Austrian musicians of the late eighteenth century. Mozart resorted to this type of exoticism in a number of pieces, most famously the Piano Sonata in A Major, K. 331, with its well-known Rondo "alla turca," and the opera *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. The conclusion of this surprising passage returns us once more to the minuet theme, as though the strange oriental excursion had been only a dream.

The DSO's last performance of Mozart's Fifth Violin Concerto took place at Orchestra Hall from February 17 to 19, 1994, with violinist H. Michael and conductor M. Fried.

Recommended Recording: Cho-Liang Lin with the English Chamber Orchestra conducted by Raymond Leppard, Sony SK 47693.

