

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) both perfected and popularized the concerto, the principal genre of orchestral music during the late Baroque Period. He also established its standard three-movement, fast-slow-fast structure. Not surprisingly, as an accomplished violinist himself, Vivaldi composed over 200 concerti for solo violin with orchestra. Nevertheless the most common type of Baroque Period concerto was the concerto grosso, designed for a small group of soloists with orchestra.

By contrast Vivaldi's *Concerto alla rustica* (1729-30) is neither a solo concerto nor a concerto grosso, but a ripieno concerto, intended for orchestra *without* soloists. Such works are important antecedents of the symphony, the most important genre of orchestral music from the Classic Period onward. Unlike Vivaldi's most famous set of concerti, *The Four Seasons*, the *Concerto alla rustica* has no descriptive text to go with it. In addition the phrase "alla rustica" is deceptive because the music is not rustic or provincial in any way and constitutes a brilliant example of the late Baroque style.

The first movement, marked Presto, is a *moto perpetuo* showpiece for the first and second violins, where the melody drives ever forward till the final cadence. A sudden change from G major to G minor near the end of the movement anticipates the type of drama more closely associated with Classic Period music and shows the more progressive nature of Vivaldi's style compared to that of contemporaries like Bach and Handel. During the Adagio second movement, the long note values at the conclusion of each two-bar phrase may be filled in with improvised melodic ornamentation by one or more instruments in the orchestra, particularly the leader of the first violins or the harpsichordist.

The last movement, marked Allegro, follows a binary form, with each of its two large sections repeated. At this point two oboes may be added to the instrumentation. Knowing that the *Concerto alla rustica* as a whole often lasts no more than five minutes may explain how Vivaldi was able to produce some 500 concerti during his lifetime, let alone numerous operas and a significant amount of sacred choral music. Although he was born and lived most of his life in Venice, Italy, he actually died in Vienna, where the nine-year-old choir boy, Joseph Haydn, sang at his funeral in the cathedral.

In 1975 **Ellen Taaffe Zwilich** (b. 1939) became the first woman to earn a doctorate in composition at the Juilliard School of Music. In 1983 she was the first woman awarded the Pulitzer Prize in music. Then from 1995-99 she was the very first person in the history of Carnegie Hall to hold its Composer's Chair. Since 1978 she has composed full-time, making her living entirely from commissions. Zwilich's earliest mature works were clearly reflective of dissonant modernism; but particularly after the sudden death of her husband in 1979 she developed a simpler and more expressive approach that focuses on direct communication to listeners.

Best known for her orchestral works, Zwilich has also written a number of song cycles and choral works, such as "Memorial for the Victims of the Sandy Hook Massacre" (2013). Starting in the 1980s she began writing an extensive series of concerti, especially focused on those instruments that lacked much concerto repertoire. She also wrote a number of concerti grossi, including the one on this concert, which was commissioned by the Washington, D.C. Friends of George Friedrich Handel in 1985 to celebrate the 300th anniversary of his birth.

As her point of departure for the entire concerto, Zwilich takes the first movement of Handel's "Great Sonata" in D Major for violin and continuo, written around 1750. The five movements of her work form a kind of musical arch (ABCB'A') based on variations of the opening D major arpeggio of Handel's sonata. As always, Zwilich definitely has something meaningful to say in her music and clearly does so in the Concerto Grosso (1985), making this one of her most enduring and widely performed instrumental works.

Nightsongs, for flugelhorn and trumpet with string orchestra and harp, was commissioned in 1973 by leading concert and studio artist Harold Lieberman, for a recital at Carnegie Hall. Composer **Richard Peaslee** (1930-2016), a graduate of Yale and the Juilliard School of Music, also studied in Paris with Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979), widely considered the greatest composition teacher of the 20th century. Best known for his work in theater, Peaslee developed an eclectic style that combined elements of jazz, folk, electronic music, and extended instrumental techniques. In 1988 he received an Emmy nomination for the sound track of the PBS documentary series *The Power of Myth* with Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers.

A single-movement work, *Nightsongs* falls into several large sections differentiated in part by contrasting tempos and successive changes between solo flugelhorn and solo trumpet. The two instruments can play basically the same range of pitches, but the flugelhorn—frequently used in jazz—has a wider bore, which gives it a mellower tone color than the trumpet.

Soloist Dr. John Ellis is drawn to the fusion of classic compositional methods with the syncopated rhythms and harmonies of jazz in *Nightsongs*, which suggests to him the musical score for a film noir. He particularly likes the way the flugelhorn keeps returning to the dark and haunting melody with which the piece opens, while the trumpet explores more energetic themes during a more dissonant section near the beginning and a much faster passage near the end. Even so, everything resolves peacefully at the close, with the return to a slow tempo and the now familiar melodic figures in the solo line.

Symphony #45 by **Franz Joseph Haydn** (1732-1809) was premiered in the fall of 1722 on the rural estate of the Esterhazy family, where he had served as Kapellmeister since 1761. By then the symphony was generally thought of as an elegant multi-movement work for the entertainment of a noble audience. Especially during the years 1766-73, Haydn became more adventurous, in what are often referred to as his "Sturm und Drang" or storm and stress symphonies. The dramatic qualities of these works have been associated with a German literary movement of approximately the same time period that focused on darkness and even terror, in a kind of preview of nineteenth-century Romanticism. Among Haydn's experimental procedures were a fondness for minor keys, strong dynamic contrasts, and unexpected silences, not to mention the striking use of dissonance. Nor did these exceptions to the norm go unnoticed in an era when most composers strove to write music that was, above all else, immediately pleasing to the ear.

From its start, Haydn's Symphony #45 was unique, owing to its home key of F# minor. It was in fact the only symphony written in that key throughout the 18th century and resulted in the composer having to order the creation of special attachments from the estate's blacksmith, so that the french hornists could play their parts. By far, the most novel movement of this work is its last. Marked Presto, the fourth movement proceeds

much as expected until a sudden pause on a harmony Prince Esterhazy himself might have assumed would quickly lead to the end of the work. Instead Haydn launches into an extended Adagio section so different from everything beforehand that it could almost be thought of as a separate fifth movement. Moreover, the revolutionary course of events during this would-be coda explains why the work was subsequently known as the “Farewell Symphony.”

Customarily Haydn’s employer held court at his fairly remote estate in Hungary from May through October, but in early November 1772 he announced that he intended to remain there through December and required all his employees— including the musicians—to do likewise, although they had been separated from their families living in a distant town for at least six months. Haydn appealed to the prince on their behalf both through the stark emotionality of Symphony 45 as a whole and by graphically illustrating the orchestra members’ unhappiness and yearning for home through the unorthodox nature of the closing Adagio. In short the composer “dismisses” the players, starting with the winds and progressing upward through the string sections until there are only two first violinists left to suggest a “happy ending” on an F# major triad. Fortunately we can assume that the prince understood the none-too-hidden message acted out by the players as they snuffed out their candles and exited the stage one by one, because the very next day he permitted everyone to pack up and leave after all.