

BENDA
C. Ph. E. BACH
HAYDN

Flute Concertos

ÁSHILDUR HARALDSDÓTTIR

Umeå Symphony Orchestra

Conductor Thord Svedlund



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Frederick the Great: A Greater Music-lover than Musician?

There has never been any question that Frederick the Great was extremely interested in music, with a special passion for the flute. It is also undeniable that he made tremendous efforts to develop his capital into a music centre, establishing the Berlin school in the mid-eighteenth century.

What experts do dispute is his musicality. From a technical point of view, he appears to have been better than the average flutist of his day, as is perfectly clear from the repertoire to which he is known to have devoted his efforts. It included about three hundred flute concerti, nearly all of which were composed either by himself or by his teacher, Johan Joachim Quantz.

Of course, no one would ever have dared to make negative comments about the royal flutist in the official media. However, the fact that he was said to show his best sides in adagios may readily be interpreted as his having some difficulty in keeping up in the fast movements, an indirect way of questioning his capacity. There is also a great deal of testimony to the effect that, rhythmically, he was extremely uncertain, and that he found it difficult to keep the beat.

However, there is also no doubt that many of the musicians and composers with whom he surrounded himself regarded it as both a great honour and a very good business proposition to be part of the musical establishment in the court of Frederick the Great. Of course, many of the renowned names of the time have long been forgotten, mainly unjustly so considering the calibre of the musical heritage they left to posterity. Still, a few names remain well known today, one of them being **Franz Benda** (1709-1786).

Benda was one of the many excellent members of a musical family from Bohemia. His primary instrument was the violin, and as early as at the age of 23 he was engaged by Fredrik, crown prince at the time. Benda remained in Fredrik's service for the rest of his life, dying at Potsdam more than fifty years later. Thus it was at the court that Benda learned the fundamentals of composition from the Graun brothers. Most of Benda's compositions are for the violin, and they are very melodic. However, his production also includes seventeen symphonies and four flute concerti, the latter surely written for and premiered with Benda's royal employer as soloist.

By far the greatest of the musicians and composers who served Frederick the Great was **Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach** (1714-1788). The second eldest of the J.S. Bach's musical sons, C.P.E. Bach was left-handed. For this reason he felt compelled to select the harpsichord and the organ as his instruments. He became the most renowned keyboard artist in Europe. His treatise, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Klavier zu spielen*, confirmed his status as a respected mid-eighteenth century theoretician and musician.

King Fredrik, however, does not seem to have acknowledged the greatness of C.P.E. Bach. One piece of evidence is the shockingly low salary Bach had to accept throughout his period of employment in Potsdam (1740-1767). It stands in sharp contrast with the sometimes tenfold higher remuneration paid to colleagues who found better favour with the King, particularly Quantz. Bach had to serve as accompanist at daily concerts, with Frederick in focus, brandishing his wooden flute.

As the years passed, C.P.E. Bach appears to have found it increasingly difficult to submit patiently to the liberties taken by his music-making Highness, and to tolerate the King's demands for his total subjection when they played together. Frederick surely sensed this dissatisfaction, and it would naturally have contributed to the discrimination with which the King treated his world-famous harpsichordist.

C.P.E. Bach's vast production includes five flute concerti, all of which were written during the years he spent at the Palace *Sanssouci*. Characteristically, none of them appears to have been originally intended for a solo flutist, but rather for a solo harpsichordist. However, the revisions appear to have been made, or at least sanctioned by C.P.E. Bach himself, probably to enable the King to star in these pieces, including the Concerto in G major, Wq 169, of which there are therefore two versions.

C.P.E. Bach had a decisive impact on the succeeding generations of composers, not least on Haydn, and particularly on Mozart. In fact, Bach said that his only contemporary who could really grasp his music was Joseph Haydn. Haydn's symphonies often reveal the influence of Bach, more so than his relatively less important concerti for solo instruments.

According to Haydn himself, one of these concerti, written in D-major for flute, was written early in his long period in the employ of Count Esterhazy. This music has, however, been lost. It was not identical with another flute concerto in D-major, long attributed to Haydn but in all probability composed sometime before 1771 by **Leopold Hofmann** (1738-1793), a Viennese contemporary of Haydn's.

Although today Hofmann is only familiar to specialists, he was a highly renowned composer in his day, particularly of sacred music. From 1772, he was *Kapellmeister* at St. Stephen's cathedral in Vienna. He was unable to continue to work much there during the last few years of his life, when he was ill, and it was with a view to becoming his successor that Mozart applied to the Vienna authorities, and was granted permission, to serve as Hofmann's unpaid assistant. In the end, however, Hofmann survived Mozart by a few years.

It is an ironic twist of fate that Haydn has come to lend his name as the composer of the flute concerto actually written by Leopold Hofmann, and no less great a work for that reason. Actually, Haydn was no great admirer of Hofmann as a composer - and the

feeling was probably mutual! In a letter dated 1781 in which Haydn sent some new songs to a music publishing company, he referred to Hofmann as "a braggart who regards himself as having attained Parnassus, and who takes every opportunity to belittle me in certain circles". Haydn described his own songs as the opposite of the "street ditties in Hofmann's style, containing no ideas, no expression and above all absolutely no melodies".

Haydn's indignant tone in this letter clearly indicates that Hofmann was widely admired in many circles, and was extremely influential on the Vienna music scene in his day. To judge by the flute concerto, he was certainly creative in composing melodies, and he was generally a musical craftsman whose compositions merit more attention than they receive today.

P-G Bergfors
translated by Linda Schenck

A YOUNG SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA — WITH NINETEENTH CENTURY ROOTS

The Umeå Symphony Orchestra is a young symphony, having only played under its current name since the 1991-2 season. Its history, however, extends much farther back in time.

For many years, the orchestra was an independent orchestra which also played for the Norrland Opera Company under the name of Umeå Sinfonietta. Actually, however, the orchestra was founded as a military band, established in Umeå in 1841.

In 1974, when the Norrland Opera Company came into being, that band had become a regional woodwind and percussion ensemble, supplemented by a string section borrowed from Stockholm when necessary. In 1976 the orchestra began hiring its own string players, and in 1978 the Sinfonietta made its debut performance.

ÁSHILDUR HARALDSDÓTTIR was born in Reykjavik, Iceland in 1965. She started playing the flute at an early age and graduated from the Reykjavik Conservatory when she was seventeen. Áshildur continued her studies in the U.S.A, first at the New England Conservatory of Music and then at the internationally renowned Juilliard School of Music from where she graduated in 1988. She continued her studies at the Paris Conservatory where she was the first flutist to be accepted at the "Cycle de perfectionnement" level.

Áshildur is the first prize winner of various competitions, has toured extensively as a soloist in America, Mexico, England and Sweden. She appears frequently on radio and television. She is a member of the chamberorchestra L'Orchestre Symphonique Francais.

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FRANZ BENDA (1709-1786)
Concerto in E-minor



1	Allegro con brio	7.48
2	Adagio un poco andante	6.53
3	Presto	5.23

C. Ph. E. BACH (1714-1788)
Concerto in G-major (Wq 169)

4	Allegro di molto	11.04
5	Lagro	7.55
6	Presto	5.31

JOSEPH HAYDN (1732-1809)
Concerto in D-major

7	Allegro moderato	7.39
8	Adagio	6.52
9	Allegro molto	5.01

Total: 64.09

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Recording engineer: Michael Bergek

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