

Heroic Horn



BEST LOVED
classical horn music

Heroic Horn

Best loved classical horn music

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|---|--|------|--|---|------|
| 1 | Robert SCHUMANN (1810–1856)
Konzertstück, Op. 86 – I. Lebhaft
<i>Robert Bonnevie, Mark Robbins,
 David C. Knapp, Scott Wilson, horn
 Seattle Symphony Orchestra • Gerard Schwarz</i>
(8.572770) | 7:18 | | Richard WAGNER (1813–1883)
Tannhäuser – Overture (excerpt)
<i>Slovak Philharmonic • Michael Halász</i>
(8.550136) | 4:25 |
| 2 | Franz Joseph HAYDN (1732–1809)
Symphony No. 31 in D major
‘Horn Signal’, Hob.I:31 – I. Allegro
<i>American Horn Quartet
 Sinfonia Varsovia • Dariusz Wiśniewski</i>
(8.557747) | 5:03 | | Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART
Horn Quintet in E flat major, K. 407 –
I. Allegro
<i>Jenő Keveházi, horn • Kodály Quartet</i>
(8.550437) | 6:14 |
| 3 | Leopold MOZART (1719–1787)
Sinfonia da Caccia for 4 Horns and Strings
‘Jagd Symphonie’ – I. Vivace
<i>Bedřich Tylšar, Zdeněk Tylšar,
 Zdeněk Divoký, Jindřich Petráš, horn
 Capella Istropolitana • František Vajnar</i>
(8.550393) | 5:28 | | Johannes BRAHMS (1833–1897)
Trio for Violin, Horn and Piano
in E flat major, Op. 40 – II. Scherzo:
Allegro – Molto meno allegro – Allegro
<i>Jenő Keveházi, horn • Ildikó Hegyi, violin
 Jenő Jandó, piano</i>
(8.550441) | 6:58 |
| 4 | Joseph FIALA (1748–1816)
Concerto for 2 Horns in E flat major –
III. Rondo andante
<i>Bedřich Tylšar, Zdeněk Tylšar, horn
 Capella Istropolitana • František Vajnar</i>
(8.550459) | 4:19 | | Pyotr Il’yich TCHAIKOVSKY
Symphony No. 5 – II. Andante cantabile,
con alcuna licenza (excerpt)
<i>Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra
 Antoni Wit</i>
(8.550716) | 5:29 |
| 5 | Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756–1791)
Horn Concerto No. 2 in E flat major,
K. 417 – III. Rondo: Allegro
<i>Jacek Muzyk, horn
 Amadeus Chamber Orchestra of Polish Radio
 Agnieszka Duczmal</i> (8.570419) | 3:52 | | Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)
Horn Sonata in F major, Op. 17 –
III. Rondo: Allegro moderato
<i>Wolfgang Tomboeck, horn
 Madoka Inui, piano</i>
(8.557471) | 4:49 |
| 6 | Pyotr Il’yich TCHAIKOVSKY (1840–1893)
The Nutcracker Suite, Op. 71a –
VIII. Waltz of the Flowers
<i>Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra • Michael Halász</i>
(8.552117-18) | 6:42 | | George Frideric HANDEL (1685–1759)
Concerto for 2 Wind Groups and Strings
in F major, HWV 334 – V. Allegro
<i>Bedřich Tylšar, Zdeněk Tylšar, horn
 Capella Istropolitana • František Vajnar</i>
(8.550393) | 2:17 |
| 7 | Franz Joseph HAYDN
Horn Concerto No. 1 in D major,
Hob.VIId:3 – III. Allegro
<i>Dmitri Babanov, horn • Cologne Chamber Orchestra
 Helmut Müller-Brühl</i> (8.570482) | 3:52 | | Georges BIZET (1838–1875)
L’Arlésienne Suite No. 1 – IV. Carillon
<i>Barcelona Symphony and
 Catalonia National Orchestra
 Pablo González</i>
(8.573546) | 4:20 |

Total Timing: 71:36

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The origins of the French horn can be traced back to the 6th century BC where Scandinavian clans used a 'horn-like' instrument made of bronze as a signalling device on the battlefield. The instrument has developed immensely since then, from hunting horn to 17th-century operatic virtuoso, arriving at the chromatic and versatile instrument we know today. Its unmistakable sonority has inspired the most eminent of composers to feature the horn as a solo instrument, Mozart's four concertos being amongst the most celebrated.

The *cor de chasse* was the first ancestor of the modern instrument to appear in a concert hall. This instrument was essentially just a coiled metal tube with a flare and mouthpiece at either end, limiting its range of notes to the natural harmonics. During a performance, players would be expected to switch between multiple instruments, all pitched in different keys. The impracticality of this led to the development of the 'crook' in the early 1700s. A 'crook' is a length of coiled tubing that could be inserted into the horn, changing the overall length of the instrument, allowing a quicker and easier transition between keys. Frustrated by the limits of the instrument, a skilled horn player, Anton

Hampel, developed a way of manipulating his right hand inside the bell to alter the pitch, filling in all the gaps between the notes of the harmonic series. Known today as the 'natural' or 'hand horn', this radical development helped elevate the horn to concerto soloist, inspiring Mozart and Haydn to write their famous concertos. The final major evolution in the history of the horn is the development of the valve, invented in the early 19th century. The valve allows the player to access multiple lengths of tubing simply by depressing any combination of four valves, quickly changing the key of the instrument, and negating the need to change a crook or use the right hand to alter the pitch.

It is quite unclear as to when exactly the horn made its debut in the concert hall, although it likely happened at some point in the 17th century. There are many Baroque operas and oratorios where composers such as Bach and Handel used the horn as a soloist. Both these composers wrote fiendishly difficult *obbligato* parts for the instrument – Bach in his B minor *Mass* and Handel in his opera *Giulio Cesare*. Leopold Mozart was another Baroque composer who had a great love of the horn and featured it in many of his compositions,

including the *Sinfonia da Caccia* we have on this album. The Mozart family's association with the most prominent horn player of the 18th century, Joseph Leutgeb, is what influenced both Leopold's and Wolfgang's compositions. Leutgeb was a colleague of Leopold Mozart in Salzburg, and through that got to know his son well. Wolfgang went on to write his four horn concertos and *Horn Quintet* for Leutgeb. They seemingly had a jovial relationship as the concerto K. 417 is dedicated as such; 'Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart takes pity of Leutgeb, ass, ox and simpleton, at Vienna, March 27, 1783'.

With the invention of the valves, on the cusp of the Romantic era, a new role for the horn opened up in the orchestra. It became much more of a lyrical instrument, less restricted to its often-used 'hunting' role. Brahms featured it heavily in his four symphonies, Tchaikovsky probably wrote the most famous orchestral solo for the instrument in the second movement of his *Fifth Symphony* and Wagner centred much of his operatic writing around the horn. Richard Strauss's father, Franz, was the principal horn of Wagner's orchestra in Munich. Strauss senior was never a fan of Wagner's, although a young Richard was; his writing for horn particularly intrigued him. Strauss wrote two horn concertos – the first he composed at just 18, the second

came some 60 years later, and is considered a much tougher challenge than the former, although both became important pieces of the horn's repertoire, and alongside Mozart's concertos are the most frequently performed.

1 **Schumann: Konzertstück, Op. 86 – I. Lebhaft**

Robert Schumann's *Konzertstück* for four horns and orchestra was written in 1849, and is considered one of the toughest challenges in the repertoire. A showpiece for a whole horn section, Romantic-era horn sections are most often made up of four players, rather than a single soloist, and this sets it apart from other concertos in the repertoire. The *Lebhaft*, the first of three movements, features virtuosic runs right from the bottom to the top of the instrument's range, including a high E (concert pitch A), a note so difficult to play that it is very rarely required.

2 **Haydn: Symphony No. 31 in D major 'Horn Signal', Hob.I:31 – I. Allegro**

Haydn featured the horn in many of his 104 symphonies, most prominently in *Symphony No. 31*, or 'Horn Signal'. Written in 1765, this piece, uncommonly for the period, features four instrumentalists.

In this first movement Haydn starts the horns off with a military fanfare, followed swiftly by a post horn signal, played only by the principal horn. The style of horn writing in this movement is reminiscent of the instrument's origins on the battlefield.

3 **L. Mozart: Sinfonia da Caccia for 4 Horns and Strings 'Jagd Symphonie' – I. Vivace**

Mozart's *Sinfonia da Caccia*, or 'symphony of the hunt', features the horn in another one of its original forms, as a call and response instrument blown on the hunt. Mozart specifically asked for the horns to be played 'raucously' and 'as loud as possible', and not in the refined manner to which the players were now accustomed. He instructed that this first movement should also feature barking dogs, other performers to shout, and gunshots!

4 **Fiala: Concerto for 2 Horns in E flat major – III. Rondo andante**

Hailing from Bohemia, Joseph Fiala was a contemporary of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and he was admired enough by Mozart that it was he who helped Fiala gain employment in Salzburg. The Bohemian school of horn playing was

revered at the time for its excellence; it was from Bohemia, through Anton Hampel, that the hand horn technique was developed.

5 **W.A. Mozart: Concerto No. 2 in E flat major, K. 417 – III. Rondo: Allegro**

The second of Mozart's four horn concertos, as previously mentioned, is adorned with the famous dedication to his friend and horn player Joseph Leutgeb; 'Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart takes pity of Leutgeb, ass, ox and simpleton, at Vienna, March 27, 1783'. This final movement, *Rondo*, is probably one of the most recognisable horn tunes, once again placing the horn in the context of the hunt.

6 **Tchaikovsky: The Nutcracker Suite, Op. 71a: VIII. Waltz of the Flowers**

One of the most recognisable tunes one hears around Christmas time is the melody the horn section plays in the *Waltz of the Flowers* from Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Nutcracker*. Written only a year before his death, Tchaikovsky had no faith in his final ballet, he once exclaimed that; 'The Ballet is infinitely worse than *The Sleeping Beauty*.' An opinion not shared by the public today, as there are countless performances of the ballet performed each year.

7 **Haydn: Horn Concerto No. 1 in D major, Hob.VIId:3 – III. Allegro**

Joseph Haydn spent the majority of his career as the Kapellmeister to the court of the immensely wealthy Esterházy family. It was only in 1762, a year after his appointment in 1761, that he wrote his *First Horn Concerto*. There are conflicting views on its dedication, but it's quite possible that it was written for Joseph Leutgeb, just like Mozart's horn concertos. The virtuosic third movement of this *Concerto* requires the player to 'dance' through all registers of the instrument incredibly swiftly.

8 **Wagner: Tannhäuser – Overture** (excerpt)
The overture for Wagner's fifth opera, *Tannhäuser*, starts with a solemn melody played by the horns and bassoons. This theme recurs throughout the opera as it depicts the 'Pilgrim's chorus', a prayer for salvation. Wagner scores this opera for four horns, unlike his *Ring Cycle* where he increases the forces to eight, including four players doubling on Wagner tubas, an instrument invented by Wagner himself specially for use in his epic opera cycle.

9 **W.A. Mozart: Horn Quintet in E flat major, K. 407 – I. Allegro**

Often referred to as Mozart's 'fifth concerto', his *Horn Quintet* is equally revered, although it was written before all of the concertos. The piece is scored for horn, violin, two violas and a cello – not the standard string quartet accompaniment. Mozart likely scored for two violas as the mellow sonority and register of the instrument is similar to that of the horn. In this movement, the first of three, the horn and the violin trade the theme and its developments back and forth.

10 **Brahms: Trio for Violin, Horn and Piano in E flat major, Op. 40 – II. Scherzo: Allegro – Molto meno allegro – Allegro**

Written in 1865, Brahms's trio for horn, violin and piano is an important part of the horn's chamber music repertoire. Despite the invention of the valve many years previously, Brahms specifically wrote the horn part for the natural or hand horn – he believed the timbre of the natural horn to be superior to that of the valved horn. Brahms wrote this piece in mourning for the death of his mother, and in an otherwise melancholic work, the second movement serves as a break from the lamenting with its playful melody.

**11 Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 5 –
II. Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza**
(excerpt)

Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 5* is famous among horn players, as it contains possibly the most well-known solo in the orchestral repertoire. The second movement starts with eight bars of a hauntingly beautiful chord sequence played by the strings before the First Horn joins with the melody of the second movement. After the premiere of the symphony, Tchaikovsky considered it a failure, stating that; 'With each day that passes I am increasingly certain that my last symphony is not a successful work', although a year later, after many subsequent performances, he wrote; 'The *Fifth Symphony* was again performed magnificently, and I have started to love it again; my earlier judgement was undeservedly harsh ...'.

**12 Beethoven: Horn Sonata in F major,
Op. 17 – III. Rondo: Allegro moderato**

Giovanni Punto was the most notable alumnus of the Bohemian horn school, taught by Anton Hampel, famed in Europe as the finest horn virtuoso of his generation. It is for him that Beethoven's *Horn Sonata* was written. Despite his premiere of the

piece, with the composer at the piano, being a triumph, Beethoven regarded the horn part to be too difficult to be a great success, so transcribed the horn part out for the cello, ensuring his publishers were happy with the profits!

**13 Handel: Concerto for 2 Wind Groups and
Strings in F major, HWV 334 – V. Allegro**

Handel wrote three concertos for two wind groups and strings, and on this album we feature the *Third Concerto in F major*. The fifth movement, *Allegro*, features some dazzling and demanding horn writing. This music is a rewrite of the hunting aria in Handel's opera *Partenope*.

14 Bizet: L'Arlésienne Suite No. 1 – IV. Carillon

The fourth movement of Bizet's *L'Arlésienne Suite No. 1* is entitled *Carillon*. A 'carillon' is a collection of bells, of multiple different pitches, often housed in the belfry of a church. Bizet use the horn's bell-like quality in this piece to create the effect of a carillon in the three-note ostinato that is the main feature of the opening and conclusion of this movement.

James Pillai
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SCOTT WILSON
© Yuen Lui

From its origins as a huntsman's signalling device to the shiny and sophisticated instrument seen today, the French horn is one of the most distinctive and versatile voices in music, equally at home in a refined chamber music setting, or amongst other members of the brass family in a full orchestra. The horn's hunting origins can be heard in the music of Mozart, both son and father, while its more lyrical qualities were exploited sublimely by Tchaikovsky and Brahms. Extremes of virtuosity are on display in Schumann's *Konzertstück*, a real showpiece for four horns and orchestra.

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