

Overture *The Hebrides* Op. 26 (1832)
Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Felix Mendelssohn was the son of a wealthy banker. Perhaps the first true musical prodigy, he produced the first of his considerable output aged only 11. A gifted soloist and conductor, Mendelssohn also championed the rescue of Bach's music. On the first of several overseas trips, he visited Scotland where Fingal's Cave on the rugged island of Staffa in the Hebrides made a deep impression. In a letter home he sketched the first 20 bars of what was to become, after much revision, this concert overture. The music artfully captures the ebb and flow and changing moods of the restless ocean, from the surging waves of the opening, through crashing breakers to the calm of the final bars.

Ballet Suite (1674 -75 arr. c.1890)

Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687) arr. Felix Mottl (1856-1911)

4. Prélude (Alceste) - Marche (Thésée) - Les Ventes (Alceste) - Marche da Capo.

Italian by birth, Lully was taken to Paris at age 14 by a French nobleman to speak Italian with his niece. Aged 21, he joined the French court after dancing in the 13-hour long "Royal Ballet of the Night" in which the 15-year-old Louis XIV played Apollo, the Sun King. For the rest of his life Lully remained with Louis XIV during which time he redefined both French opera and ballet forms. Lully died of gangrene contracted after he struck his foot with his staff whilst conducting his *Te Deum* to celebrate the King's recovery from surgery!

This excerpt is from one of several suites by the Austrian conductor Felix Mottl who made a number of arrangements of baroque works for the modern symphony orchestra. It features lively excerpts from two of Lully's operas, *Alceste* and *Thésée*.

Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra in Eb Hob. 7e/1 (1796)

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

1. Allegro
2. Andante
3. Finale: Allegro

Joseph Haydn was the most celebrated composer in Europe for much of his career as well as one of Beethoven's teachers. The son of a wheelwright and folk musician, after various minor musical positions he was appointed to the Esterházy court in 1761. As Kapellmeister Haydn had responsibility for all the enormously wealthy Court's musical activities. Despite the intense workload and his isolation from other musical life, during the 29 years he served the Esterházy's Haydn took full advantage of his access to excellent musicians to produce an impressive number of compositions in his own unique style.

Until the late 18th century the "natural" trumpet could only play notes in the harmonic series of a particular key. To play in a different key required a different "crook" to change the length of the instrument. To overcome this, a keyed trumpet was developed in the 1790s by the Viennese virtuoso Anton Weidinger who commissioned concertos by Haydn and Hummel. Due to its inferior tone, the keyed trumpet was superseded by the modern valve trumpet 20 years later.

Haydn's famous concerto exploits the full technical possibilities of the new instrument. Listen for the previously impossible sudden changes of key and the chromatic passages and trills we now take for granted.

INTERVAL (20 minutes)

Symphony No. 8 in F Op. 93 (1812)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

1. Allegro vivace e con brio
2. Allegretto scherzando
3. Tempo di Menuetto
4. Allegro vivace

Born in Bonn, Beethoven later moved to Vienna and the period there from 1800 to 1812 was his most financially stable and also his most productive, resulting in all his symphonies but the last. During the summers Beethoven relocated to the country to escape Vienna's unsanitary conditions. In 1812 he visited Bohemian spa towns, where, as well as meeting Goethe, he wrote his famous letter to the "Immortal Beloved". Full of pathos, it was probably never sent to its mysterious subject, but provides a glimpse of Beethoven's tortured mental state at the time.

His last call was at Linz, where he stayed in the house of his younger brother, Johann, of whose relationship with his housekeeper Beethoven strongly disapproved. In the midst of all the turmoil he stirred up, Beethoven completed his 8th symphony, the most humorous, joyous and compact of all the nine. Sandwiched between the intense seventh and towering ninth, the eighth appears at first sight to be lightweight. However, this belies its revolutionary nature, and that perhaps it best represents Beethoven's underlying personality. As one commentator wrote: "It is the laughter of a man who has lived and suffered and, scaling the heights, achieved the summit" and "Beethoven is trying to make a symphony in which textural, rhythmic, orchestral and harmonic invention take the place of expressive intensity". At its 1814 premiere alongside the "deeper" seventh symphony and Wellington's Victory, the audience were somewhat bemused and gave it a half-hearted reception.

The first movement opens with the same phrase that concludes it, the first of many witty touches. Built on a somewhat heavy-footed dance theme, the music's dynamics ebb and flow, culminating in the longest fortissimo (i.e. loud!) passage in the classical symphony. There is no slow movement. Instead, a brief Allegretto scherzando pokes fun at Johann Mälzel's recent invention, the metronome, the wind "ticking" underneath a jovial melody on the strings. Unique to Beethoven's symphonies, the third movement returns to the outdated Menuett and Trio form in place of a Scherzo. However, try to dance to this minuet, with its strange offbeats and lilting horn and clarinet solos in the trio! The Finale is almost as long as the rest of the symphony and scurries along with unbridled zest. Revolutionary for its era, it is full of sudden key changes, dramatic pauses and changing orchestral colour, the prolonged coda suggesting a question still to be answered.