



Colonel Jason K. Fettig, Director

UNITED STATES MARINE BAND
Thursday, May 20, 2021 at 7:30 P.M.
Streaming at [youtube.com/usmarineband](https://www.youtube.com/usmarineband)

Mozart's Gran Partita

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-91)

Serenade No. 10 in B-flat, K. 361, *Gran Partita*

Largo; Allegro molto

Minuet

Adagio

Minuet: Allegretto

Romance: Adagio; Allegretto; Adagio

Theme and Variations

Rondo: Allegro molto

PROGRAM NOTES

Serenade No. 10 in B-flat, K. 361, *Gran Partita*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91)

Late eighteenth-century Vienna saw the rise of a rather curious musical fad, due almost single-handedly to the influence of Emperor Joseph II, who in April of 1782 had taken “eight individual wind-players” into his service to perform both court and public concerts. So called “Harmoniemusik” compositions—for pairs of oboes, clarinets, horns, and bassoons—soon became exceedingly popular, and the Viennese aristocracy followed the Emperor’s lead in securing their own Harmonie groups. In addition, the appeal of the music written for these ensembles began to cut across class lines, as these bands were employed for a variety of social occasions away from the palaces, both indoors and outdoors. Musicians who were out of work would even form Harmonie ensembles to play in the streets for money.

In a letter to his father dated July 20, 1782, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart complained, “I am up to my eyes in work, for by Sunday week I have to arrange my opera [*The Abduction from the Seraglio*] for wind instruments. If I don’t, someone else will anticipate me and secure the profits.... You have no idea how difficult it is to arrange a work of this kind for wind instruments, so that it suits these instruments and loses none of its effect.” Despite the difficulty mentioned by Mozart in transcribing an orchestral work for winds alone, the composer was clearly interested in the musical potential and money-making appeal of these little bands, and he soon contributed three original works to the medium. The Serenade in E-flat, K. 375 (1781–82) and the Serenade in C minor, K. 388 (1782) were both written for the usual eight winds, but it was his other Harmoniemusik piece that broke the mold and set the stage for the continuing development of wind ensemble music in the century after his death. The Serenade in B-flat, K. 361, written between 1781 and 1782, employed larger forces than the conventional octet, adding two basset horns (a lower cousin of the clarinet), two additional horns, and double bass. The subtitle *Gran Partita* that is attached to this serenade today was added to the autograph score by an unknown hand many years after Mozart’s death.

Although the title was not the composer’s own, it was quite fitting. Not only was this a larger instrumentation for a wind ensemble than was normal at the time, but the scope of the Serenade in B-flat was unlike Mozart’s wind octets. Most serenades of the time were intended as light entertainment music, often to be performed in the background at social events, but the *Gran Partita* was cut from a different cloth. With seven distinct movements, instead of the usual three or four, and clocking in at around fifty minutes for a typical performance, this piece was clearly intended to be more than a soundtrack for a soiree. The *Gran Partita* may owe its grand scope to the fact that the composer was hoping that the Emperor himself would attend the work’s première, given in 1784 at the home of Mozart’s friend, clarinetist Anton Stadler. Mozart was well aware of the Emperor’s love of wind music and likely was looking to impress him with this innovative and substantial piece for the new genre. Mozart included a little bit of every compositional skill that he possessed at the time in the *Gran Partita*. The slow introduction showcases a symphonic grandeur that could well have begun the overture to one of his operas, and it is followed by a substantial Allegro molto. The slow movements are among the most beautiful Mozart ever composed (the first of the two was prominently featured in the 1984 film *Amadeus*), and the two minuets run the gamut from courtly elegance to hints of popular peasant dances at the other end of the social spectrum. Mozart threw in an impressive Theme and Variations movement for good measure and concluded this monumental masterpiece with a raucous Rondo in the fashionable “Turkish” style of the day.