

*Trio in E-flat Major, Op. 20, No. 5*

Jan Vanhal

The three-movement *Trio, No. 5* was originally part of a series of six trios arranged for clarinet, violin, and cello or piano and first published in Paris in 1781 with the opus number 20 assigned by the publisher. The precise date of its composition is uncertain, but it may be assumed that the *Trio* was written sometime in the 1770s. (For this performance, the realization of the bass part for piano was made by Walter Bergmann at the request of the Verdehr Trio.)

The trio's inventively rich scoring makes use of a natural singing quality that points to Czech folksong with its characteristic harmonies and rhythms. As is the case with many of Vanhal's subsequent works, it follows, given the context of the time, its own path, and can be seen in retrospect to independently recreate the principal current of development of the First Viennese School. Even though Vanhal was a contemporary of Haydn, his music already prefigures a Mozartian world. Both Haydn and Mozart had great esteem for Vanhal as both a composer and a man, and invited him, along with Dittersdorf, to join their quartet as cellist. Mozart himself was already well acquainted with Vanhal's *Violin Concerto*, and was also fond of his works for the clarinet, then a new instrument, which he would later make famous in his own compositions.

Jan Vanhal (the name was also spelled Wanhall, Wanhal, and Van Hall) (1739–1813) was born in Nechanice, Bohemia. At the age of twenty he journeyed to study with Dittersdorf in Vienna and soon became one of the city's leading composers. In 1769, he made a long and successful tour of Italy, but soon upon returning to Vienna, suffered a mental breakdown. Thereafter, he visited the estate of Count Erdody in Hungary, remaining until 1780, when apparently he returned to Vienna. He lived in Vienna until his death in 1813.

Vanhal, overshadowed first by Haydn and Mozart, later by Beethoven, is often unjustly considered to be only the author of rich and melodically beautiful literature for students of keyboard instruments, but that is only one facet of his diverse musical legacy, and one connected to his life-long vocation as a successful and sought-after teacher. In addition to his piano works, Vanhal was a prolific composer of church music, symphonies, quartets, concertos, and chamber music, several of which include wind instruments. His best works were created in the 60s and 70s of the eighteenth century, and by the 80s of the same century, his works were much favored in the repertoire of the time and he enjoyed the support of many noble patrons. His music became of interest to leading European music publishers, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century, word of Vanhal's reputation even reached the shores of the United States.