

Program Notes by Chris Darwin. Please use freely for non-commercial purposes.

W. A. Mozart (1756-1791) Adagio for Cor Anglais & String Trio K580a (1789)

Mozart's manuscript of this piece is just a fragment. He specified that the upper part should be played by the cor anglais, but we do not know what he intended for the other three parts. Alfred Einstein's 1937 edition of Köchel's catalogue suggests 2 violins and cello, but the authors of the 1964 edition revise this, for technical reasons, to 2 horns (or basset horns) and bassoon. Consequently, numerous different arrangements have appeared in print. The theme is beautiful – if it reminds you of something, it could be the opening of his famous motet '*Ave verum corpus*' which he wrote two years later.

The cor anglais bears the same relation to the oboe as the viola does to the violin, larger and sounding a fifth lower. But why 'cor anglais' when it is neither English nor a horn? The instrument was invented in Silesia around 1720. Its predecessor, the oboe de caccia (hunting), with its curved body and flared bell, looked like the horns apparently played by mediaeval angels. The Middle German word *engellisch* can mean either angelic or English, so perhaps the meanings got muddled.