

The divertimento was a musical form popular in the late 18th century. It was, in actuality, a suite made up of four or more distinct short compositions which revolved around a common key center. As musical "diversions," divertimenti were often light-hearted, occasional music and would most likely have been heard as background music at an aristocratic gathering. Both Mozart and Haydn wrote numerous divertimenti as well as serenades -- works of an identical nature -- thus rendering the two terms interchangeable.

Mozart wrote a total of 23 Divertimenti for all sorts of combinations of instruments, and they required anywhere from 6 to 14 musicians to perform. Because of their light nature, they were often overlooked by serious Mozart scholars as trivialities, but recently they have been shown to be gems in their own right and worthy of their place alongside the master's other chamber works.

Featured this month are two complete Divertimenti: No. 3 in Eb Major, K. 166 (for 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 English horns, 2 French horns, and 2 bassoons) and No. 8 in F Major, K. 213 (for 2 oboes, 2 French horns, and 2 bassoons). Each has four movements, and they were written in 1773 and 1775, respectively.

General MIDI patches have been assigned to the tracks to facilitate performance. Of course your synth or sampler may require re-patching or octave adjustment.