

Mozart: Fragment of a Sonata Allegro for Piano and Violin in B flat Fr 1781c

Five Completions

Editorial Introduction

When Mozart began this 65-bar fragment of a Sonata Allegro for piano and violin he clearly had great confidence that he would finish the piece, for – uniquely among his surviving fragments – he dated it precisely at the top left hand of the first page of the manuscript: 'Vienna il 24 di Marzo 1781'. Another token of his initial ambition is the confident heading 'Sonata I' at the top of the page. It seems this movement was to head a new set of sonatas (which eventually came to fruition as K. 376, 377, 379 and 380 in the summer of 1781).

Mozart's letters from this time provide a quite detailed context to this source. He had arrived in Vienna on 16 March, summoned directly from Munich by the Archbishop of Salzburg who was holding court in the capital. Within 24 hours he was taking part in concerts, as he reported to his father on 17 April. On the day that he composed Fr 1781c Mozart wrote his father a long letter full of court intrigue and giving a detailed account of a very busy diary of social events. He did not mention the violin sonata, but the need for the piece becomes obvious in letter of a 8 April: 'Today ... we had a concert, where three of my compositions were performed: new ones, of course ... [including] a sonata with violin accompaniment for myself, which I composed last night between eleven and twelve (but in order to be able to finish it I wrote out only the accompaniment for Brunetti and retained my own part in my head)'.¹

Why did Mozart abandon a sonata he had begun in good time and resort instead to this last-minute piece of work? Careful never to repeat himself, did he review the nearly-complete exposition when he reached bar 66, and decide that it was too close (or at least its opening theme was too close) to the first movement of the B flat Sonata for piano and violin K. 378/317d, composed in Salzburg two years earlier? Or did he merely lay aside the fragment because of the Viennese social whirl, and returning to it just before the concert of 8 April, realised it was not susceptible to such eleventh-hour treatment? Or were there aspects of the content, shape or pacing of the exposition that made Mozart pause and abandon the fragment? The music is set down very confidently on the page: the only obvious revision is that an initial version of bar 55, which originally rhymed with bar 51, was struck out and immediately rewritten at the top of f. 2r. But that very fluency could indicate that Mozart wrote the score quickly without intermediate pauses for deep reflection.

The fragment is exceptionally rich in content, with the exposition presenting a chain of no fewer than nine distinct themes in the space of 65 bars. This gives rise to an exhilarating play of different topics but it puts pressure on *il filo*. In three respects the 'thread' works perfectly well: (1) the bar-by-bar voice-leading continuity is exemplary and the plasticity of the phrasing breathes 'naturally'; (2) the formal parataxis (typical of Mozart's concerto allegros) is mirrored in the concerto-like virtuosity of the gestures from bar 13 onwards; (3) the rapidity and sure pacing of the topical interplay exhibit Mozart's dramatic flair and strongly invoke the expressive codes and habits of comic opera. But the opening theme (with its even quaver pattern, ample phrasing and lyricism in

¹ E. Anderson (trans & ed), *The Letters of Mozart and His Family* (London: Macmillan, 1988, p. 722).

bars 1–12) does not sit entirely at ease with the energetic jostle (bordering on hyperactivity) of the exposition's other themes.

These two features, the super-abundant invention and the uneasy change of stylistic register in bars 12–13, pose challenges for a completion:

1. What are the formal implications of the shift in stylistic register at bars 12–13? How should the join between the end of the exposition and the beginning of the recapitulation be paced? Should the recapitulation even begin with the theme from bars 1–12? Or does the material of the exposition imply a 'reverse recapitulation', or some kind of hybrid, with the opening theme and its reprise framing the entire movement? What are the knock-on implications for the shape, pacing and content of the development section? Each of my completions engages with these questions in a different way (see comments on each completion below).

2. Given the exposition's concatenation of nine distinct themes, how to choose the content of the development section? Maximilian Stadler's solution of throwing in a bit of everything, and in the same order as the exposition, is unstylish. Hard choices are inevitable, because Mozart's development sections from the period late 1779 to early 1781 tend not to engage more than two themes from the exposition. It was more common for them to focus on just one of the exposition's themes, or to introduce a completely new theme and focus on that. Again, each of my completions attempts to engage with this issue in a different way.

3. In tandem with point 2 go questions of style and pacing in the development section. How should it respond to the dramatic energy and virtuoso demands of the exposition? An intensification of those characteristics could easily slip into parody (and would, at the very least, be difficult to control). To carry on in the same stylistic register would be easier from a compositional perspective, and would be the most straightforward way of maintaining *il filo*; but in such circumstances it would be exceptionally difficult to engineer a focal point -- the musical 'moment' that no Mozart development section lacks. And if the development section is to contrast with the exposition, how to maintain *il filo* and manage an inevitable lowering of musical tension? Again, each of my completions attempts to answer these questions in a different way.

4. The crux of all the questions raised above is really what happens at the end of the development section. Should it be goal-directed so that the start of the recapitulation is a strong point of arrival? Or should it wind down from brilliant-style drama to usher back in the lyrical mode of the opening theme? Or should it stand more neutrally on V so that the recapitulation provides tonal resolution without a dramatic sense of arrival? Or should the opening theme emerge from a sudden musical twist? All these strategies have their Mozartian precedents.

The early 1780s was a time of formal experiment in Mozart's instrumental music. (A cursory glance at the completed Sonatas of 1781 will amply confirm this assertion.) So the five versions presented here comprise what are for me the five most obvious formal experiments (within the confines of Mozart's instrumental style from that precise period) implied by the materials of Mozart's fragment. Because Mozart never repeated himself exactly, some of these completions inexactly echo (or rather rethink) components of earlier models from the late 1770s, while others exactly anticipate future developments up to 1785.

Given that Mozart seems to have written down the exposition in a single day, I set myself the limit of writing down each of my completions over 24 hours (which is not to say that a more extended mental process of composition preceded each bout of writing).

While pitches, durations and articulation seem carefully notated in the autograph manuscript of the fragment, there are no dynamic or expressive markings. I have added dynamics and other expressive markings to bars 1–66 in my completions.

Completion 1

Completion 1 takes a conservative stylistic stance, emphasising the aspects of the fragment that belong to the Mozart of the late 1770s whilst attempting to re-imagine them in his new Viennese context.

The newly composed conclusion of the exposition (bars 66–9) continues the process of phrase compression from the end of the fragment. The development is a single-span reworking of the opening theme, designed to contrast with the exposition's thematic diversity. Its tone is also different: sustained lyricism rather than the dramatic play of constantly cutting between different topics. (Though, of course, the topical contrast between the exposition and development is a formal echo of the exposition's internal topical contrasts.) Superficially, then, this development section lowers the musical tension -- a ploy which has plenty of precedents in Mozart's Sonatas from the previous four years. At first the development focuses attention on two musical parameters that were not foregrounded in the exposition: (1) timbre -- the melody is now played by the violin rather than the piano, a move which, by linking the material's new function to a new texture, anticipates the middle episode of the poetic *Adagio* of K. 481 (1785); (2) the affective qualities of melodic variation and their effect on harmonic pacing -- a characteristic that was earlier precluded by the thematic richness and formal momentum of the exposition. But as the harmonic trajectory of the development section tends towards V/vi in bars 86–92 it takes on the tensions of a common schema from the 1760s–90s: a pedal point on III (bars 92–5) leads to a retransition passage (bars 96–105), here configured as a harmonic twist towards a V pedal to prepare for the return of I at the start of the recapitulation in bar 106.

In his expanded binary forms around 1780 Mozart tended to follow bridge-like development sections of this sort with recapitulations that, as if in compensation, intensify the process of variation in the reprise of exposition themes. (Examples include the arias 'Se il padre perdei' from Act II of *Idomeneo* and 'Traurigkeit war mir zum Lose' from Act II of *Die Entführung*.) Hence in this completion bars 118–130 expand and harmonically intensify bars 13–21 from the exposition; and all the themes that appeared in F major in the exposition (bars 30–66) are subjected to varied transpositions strategies in the recapitulation, thereby heightening the climactic effect of the rhetoric with new registral high points.

Completion 2

There are various late-eighteenth-century models for reverse recapitulations. Mozart's rare examples demonstrate three distinct but overlapping approaches. In the first movement of the Symphony in D K. 133 (July 1772) [see Figure 1 below] the exposition's themes are reordered in the recapitulation so that the opening theme only returns at the very end of the movement,

transformed into a brilliant apotheosis. This culmination is set up by the form of the development section: it begins with a long V pedal point under new thematic material in bars 79–93 before an interrupted cadence initiates a new formal phase derived from the exposition’s bars 14–19. Mozart seamlessly morphs the music – mid-phrase – into a strict recapitulation at bar 101. Bars 101–160 recapitulate bars 18–77, from the end of the transition section, through the entire second group of themes, to the exposition’s concluding cadential fanfares. Only then, at bar 161, does the cadence that punctuated the end of the exposition lead into the transformed recapitulation of the opening theme (bars 161–177) before the movement is rounded off with a brief reprise of the fanfares (bars 177–182).

The Symphony in G K. 318 (26 April 1779) [see Figure 2 below] has a composite form derived from the older Italian overture. Following its exposition (bars 1–70) and development section (bars 71–109) a 98-bar closed-form Andante is inserted (bars 110–207). The Andante cadences into a concluding Allegro that begins with a 12-bar transition including a partial recapitulation in bars 215–219 of the last four bars of the exposition’s transition section (bars 28–32). The recapitulation of the second group of themes follows in bars 220–255 and the Symphony ends with a coda (bars 256–274) that reworks the material of bars 1–19.

In the overture to *La clemenza di Tito* K. 621 (September 1791) [see Figure 3 below], the recapitulation begins with the second subject (bars 112–130) and the reprise of the exposition's opening paragraph (starting in bar 131) is modified to form a brilliant-style coda. This reversal in the order of the thematic material would appear to be simpler than in the two symphonies discussed above, but in the recapitulation Mozart omits an entire section from the second subject (bars 45–55 in the exposition) – material that formed the thematic basis for the last 27 bars of the development section (bars 86–112).

Figure 1: Mozart Symphony in D, K. 133 (1772), First Movement

Exposition

First Group	bs 1–13			
Transition	bs 14–42			
	T ¹ bs 14–19	T ² bs 20–34	T ³ bs 34–42	
Second Group				bs 42–78

Development

V pedal				bs 79–93
Interruption	T ¹ b. 94ff			

Recapitulation

Transition	T ¹ bs 101–102	T ² bs 103–117	T ³ bs 117–125	
Second Group				bs 125–160
First Group	bs 161–177 (apotheosis)			
Coda				bs 177–182

Figure 2: Mozart Symphony in G K. 318 (1779)

Exposition

First Group	bs 1–19	
Transition	bs 20–32	
	T ¹ bs 20–27	T ² bs 28–32
Second Group		bs 33–70

Development

D ¹ bs 71–109	D ² bs 110–207 [<i>Andante</i>]	D ³ bs 208–219 [in which bs 215–219 = T ²]
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Recapitulation

Second Group	bs 220–255	
First Group/Coda		bs 256–274

Figure 3: Mozart *La clemenza di Tito* K. 621 (1791), Overture

Exposition

First Group	bs 1–29	
Second Group	bs 29–55	
	S ¹ bs 29–45	S ² bs 45–55

Development

D ¹ bs 55–85	D ² bs 86–112 [= extension of S ²]
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Recapitulation

Second Group	S ¹ bs 112–130
First Group	bs 131–156, elided with
Coda	bs 157–168

These three pieces are models for how to reorder, modify and omit exposition material in a reverse recapitulation. Based on the principle that Mozart did not repeat himself in those works, this completion takes those processes and applies them in a way that has no exact precedents in Mozart. As in the first movement of K. 133, the development section of this completions morphs into a reprise of the exposition’s transition section: bars 105–109 correspond to bars 25–9. The recapitulation begins with a reprise of the initial three themes of the exposition’s second group: bars 110–138 correspond, with transpositional variants and some figurative modifications, to bars 30–58.

The 'sospirando' figures from bars 57–9 have an extended reprise in bars 137–140 to wind down from the micro-rhythmic energy of the second group to the recapitulation of the more placid opening theme from bar 141. The recapitulation of the opening paragraphs proceeds regularly until bar 164 where – following the example of the Overture to *Tito* – material that formed the end of the development section is omitted from the recapitulation. In this completion some of the material's components are reshaped into a concerto-like climactic phrase in bars 164–9, leading to the reprise of the exposition's cadential phrases (bars 170–76 corresponding to bars 60–66).

Blended into this form is a modulating codetta at the end of the exposition (bars 66–71a), designed to transition back to the opening of the movement when the repeat is taken. From bar 176 the reprise of this passage leads to a hiatus on IV at the start of bar 181. The coda that follows anticipates, in both conception and tone, a strategy of Mozart's that appears more commonly in the sonata allegros (and their concerto equivalents) from 1782–7 (for example, in the first movements of K. 387 and K. 516) than in 1781 itself. Its motivation is complex, but stems largely from a fundamental problem in the reverse recapitulation. As the relationship between musical topics, themes, structural functions and rhetorical functions became more sophisticated in instrumental sonata form in between the 1760s and 1790s, so the fundamental reordering of 'initiating music' (the first group of themes) and 'concluding music' (the second group of themes) became more problematic than the mere reordering of musical periods whose functions are largely interchangeable. In short, can the formal illogicality of presenting closing material before initiating material be made to sound coherent in a recapitulation? A small but significant index of this problem can be found in the Symphony K. 318. In the exposition the paragraphs are ordered: (1) opening theme; (2) second theme; (3) a climactic combination of the first and second themes in invertible counterpoint. But in the recapitulation their order is: (1) second theme; (2) the combination of the first and second themes in invertible counterpoint; (3) opening theme. Whilst the musical topic, gestural energy and forceful unison presentation of the opening theme are perhaps rhetorically strong enough to make its reprise climactic at the end of the movement, the ways it is made to trump the more naturally climactic contrapuntal combination of both themes that precedes it is not entirely unforced. (This is, perhaps, a token of the inherent problems that made reverse recapitulations such a minority sport in the closing decades of the eighteenth century.) In this completion I intuited the need to balance the weight of 'initiating music' in the second half of the recapitulation with a coda that provides weight to the movement's closure by stopping the brilliant style in its tracks with something insouciant, a little wistful, and perhaps – through its understatement – a more effective full stop than the headlong rush of the cadential phrases in bars 170–181. Of course, I have doubts about what I have done here. I have therefore attempted different responses to these issues in completions 4 and 5, discussed below.

Completion 3

The thought experiment behind completion 3 is this: what if, in an idle moment, Mozart had come across the manuscript of the fragment in the autumn of 1789 and decided it was worth spending a day completing it? How might the economy of his instrumental style in that year have played out in such a completion?

The first characteristic to emerge from this experiment is the comparatively abrupt ending of the exposition, with just a single bar added to Mozart's fragment before the double bar.

The development section has three distinct phases:

- (1) An initial harmonic swerve, taking the music to V/vi with a variation of bars 63–4;
- (2) A relatively stable double paragraph in the form of a lyrical dialogue between the violin and the piano, modulating from vi to V/ii; motivically this section is a free reworking of material from bars 1–12 (accompaniment), 16–17, 42 and the expressive gesture from bars 55–56;
- (3) A more energetic and rapid sequential paragraph based on bars 67–8, tracing a circle of fifths from V^7/ii to V^7/IV (bars 93–100), then an ascending 5–6 linear intervallic pattern (bars 101–3) leading to a V pedal (bars 104–8).

There are various models for this, most obviously the first movement of the String Quartet in F K. 590.

Given that the join between the first and second group of themes is a ‘bifocal’ close in the exposition (bars 29–30), no modifications are necessary in the first 29 bars of the recapitulation (bars 109–137). From bar 138 no changes have been made to the exposition’s running order, but typical Mozartian games of transposing up and down occur.

While the application of stylistic principles from the later 1780s opens up some fruitful formal and expressive possibilities in completing the fragment, it inevitably tampers the youthful exuberance of the fragment in ways that sit uncomfortably in my ear. Not least, one might not be convinced by the replacement of a chain-like (paratactic) array of themes with a focus on the cumulative (syntactic) contrapuntal development of a narrower array of ideas. Mozart’s inventive over-abundance cannot be contained.

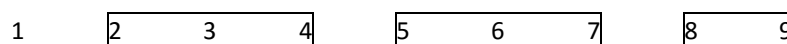
Completion 4

Completion 4 is an alternative essay on the reverse recapitulation. The opening theme returns only at the very end of the recapitulation, thereby acting as a frame to the entire movement. This requires a more complex reordering of events than in Completion 2 in order to preserve the strongest possible *filò* through the recapitulation (see Figure 4).

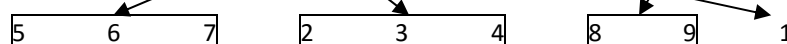
Figure 4

Completion 4: thematic disposition

Exposition



Recapitulation



Development

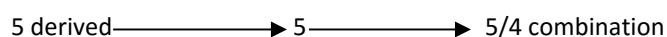


Figure 4 does not, however, show the nips and tucks that are necessary to provide bar-by-bar continuity between the reordered themes, and the pacing of those links to counter-balance the problems of 'initiating' and 'closing' music appearing in the 'wrong' parts of the recapitulation (see bars 134–8, 147–8, and 156–61). In particular, the anticlimactic rhetoric of bars 157–61 plays a vital role in reconfiguring the function of theme 1 from initiation to closure.

The development section draws on alternative formal strategies to the other versions. It is paratactic, with the following discrete sections:

- (1) It introduces a new theme (derived from theme 5) in F major after the double bar.
- (2) The theme is varied by mode (major–minor).
- (3) A series of false starts with theme 5 traces a rapid circle of fifths (v to vi).
- (4) Theme 5 (in vi) is embellished and harmonically subverted with a swerve towards IV.
- (5) Imitation on the head motive of theme 5 decorates an ascending progression (IV, v, vi) then a 7-6 linear intervallic pattern that takes the music to V/I, finally morphing into:
- (6) Theme 4, decorated by the head motive of theme 5 in the violin, which prepares the return of I.

On the face of it, this paratactic structure might owe more to Haydn's habits than Mozart's. But in several instrumental works of the early 1780s (most clearly in the String Quartets in D minor K. 421/417b and E flat K. 428) Mozart adopted the older composer's schemata in the first-movement development sections.

Completion 5

Completion 5 attempts to hybridize the strategies of regular and reverse recapitulations by incorporating two formal schemata that appear in various sonata allegros by Mozart: (1) a coda that lowers harmonic tension by featuring a IV-inflected variation of a prominent theme (cf the finales of numerous piano concertos including K. 482, 488, 503); (2) a staggered (or 'parametrically non-congruent') recapitulation in which the opening of the main theme is reprised before the return of the tonic (cf the first movements of K. 453 and K. 550, for example).

The development section begins with a characteristic double swerve: V – III – IV (cf the finales of K. 543 and K. 590, among many examples from the later 1780s). My thematic strategy here is to preserve the high energy level of the closing themes in the exposition, and to sustain it until the very last moment in the development section, thereby dramatising the sudden outbreak of stasis in the bar before the recapitulation. I have tried to control the punctuating force of the cadence in G minor at bars 91–2 so that it just stops short of being definitive, leaving just enough room to enable the interrupted cadence in bars 93–4 and the understatement the perfect cadence in bars 95–6 to effect a smooth transition to the thematic recapitulation at bar 96 and, with a further delay of nine bars, to the return of the tonic – weakly at bar 104, and strongly (at last a 'correct' point of arrival) at bar 108. There is no exact precedent for this in Mozart, but each component has precedents.

Undeniably the musical moment of the development is the strong arrival on G minor at bar 90 and its subsequent confirmation in the succeeding bars. Although the figuration in the piano part is derived from theme 2, and therefore gets recapitulated in the tonic at bar 108ff, the entire gesture

somehow needs a stronger resolution than it gets at bar 108. For this reason, the coda does not end quietly with the IV-inflected variation of the opening theme, but with a reprise of bars 90–94, now moving beyond the original shortfall in closure to punctuate the end of the movement with an emphatic full stop.

Postscript

Reflecting on this project after a gap of two years, I am struck by the ways in which my attempts to reconcile the contrasting materials of the fragment only end up, in one way or another, magnifying them. At the time I thought that each of the completions was comprised in some way, either formally, or in the moment-by-moment coherence of its chain of cause and effect, or in breaching the decorum of the accompanied sonata. Perhaps, in my initial appraisal of the fragment, I became too fixated on the challenge to decorum presented by the strongly contrasting materials. Reviewing the fragment and my completions, and with the experience of having rehearsed and performed them, I am now more ready to recognise that the extreme contrasts can be intrinsically attractive to performers and listeners.