

# Fragment of a Fantasy in C minor for Piano and Violin Fr 1782I

## Two Completions

### Editorial Introduction

#### The Context of the Fragment

This 27-bar fragment most likely dates from the period in 1782 when Mozart came under the influence of the musical taste of Baron Gottfried van Swieten when he attended van Swieten's Sunday musical gatherings where the music of Handel, J. S. Bach and C. P. E. Bach was performed.<sup>1</sup> The fragment is a remarkable – and very personal – exercise in the *Empfindsamer Stil* of C. P. E. Bach. Its intense expressivity is achieved by means of irregular metrical patterns and phrasing, luxuriant and unbalanced ornamentation, a very high tolerance level of voice-leading dissonance in the musical foreground, and a simulation of the rhetoric of improvised performance. The keyboard part of the fragment is very fully worked out, apart from a lack of dynamic indications in bars 1–24. In contrast, the violin line is blank for all but bars 23–7, where it takes a complementary but distinctly subsidiary role to the piano.

We can only speculate about the reason why Mozart did not complete the fragment. Perhaps the opportunity to work on other projects with the prospect of immediate financial return took the composer's attention away from the unfinished piece and the moment simply passed; perhaps Mozart played the torso to van Swieten and had a cool response (one wonders how van Swieten – whose own compositions are so expressively stiff – might have responded to bars 13–14); perhaps, as in so many of the fugue fragments from that period, Mozart began the exercise with enthusiasm but in the course of the work felt his own idiolect was too uncomfortably restrained by the parameters he had set himself – a peculiar type of self-inflicted meta-agon, to be sure, but one that may have been creatively debilitating all the same. (One should not be too pessimistic about this. After all, Mozart clearly drew on the experience of writing Fr 1782I in his Adagio in B minor K. 540 (1787) and echoes of it are evident in, for example, the audacious voice leading of passages in the second and fourth movements of the 'Jupiter' Symphony.)

The improvisatory style of the fragment, coupled with the limited extent of the violin writing, was no doubt the motivation for Maximilian Stadler's early-nineteenth-century completion of the fragment as a Fantasia for solo piano. But in doing so, Stadler either misread or chose to ignore some clues about Mozart's formal and generic intentions. First, the subsidiary nature of the violin writing reflects the mid-eighteenth-century concept of the accompanied sonata – one that is perfectly in keeping with the fragment's stylistic conservatism, although it must have seemed inconceivably old-fashioned to Stadler around 1800 (not least in the light of Mozart's innovative accompanied sonatas which put the two instruments on a more equal footing). Nevertheless, there are hints throughout the fragment of a vital role for the violin: for example, the need to sustain the very slow-moving crotchets and minims in the upper voices in bars 7–9 and bars 11–15 (whose sound would fade quickly on a south German piano of the period), and an obvious invitation to dialogue with the piano's treble line in bars 19–20. Second, despite the fragment's evocation of improvisation, it is

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<sup>1</sup> See Mozart's letter of 10 April 1782 to his father.

structured as the first reprise of a two-part form: it has two clearly articulated and well balanced tonal areas – the tonic C minor in bars 1–15 and the mediant E flat major in bars 16–27. And these underpin a contrast between two distinctive improvisational styles: the first overtly north German; the second more balanced, elegant and typical of the type of vocally inspired embellishment that was part of Mozart's 'normal' style at the time. The most unmistakable sign of Mozart's binary-form intentions is the repeat sign at the end of the fragment. In that era binary forms conventionally repeated their first reprise, free fantasias did not.

The principal questions for a completion are therefore:

- 1) How can the violin best complement the piano writing in bars 1–22?
- 2) Should the form of the movement be straightforwardly binary (with a second reprise from bar 28 mirroring and tonally resolving bars 1–27), or should it be rounded binary, with the section after bar 27 taking a path from E flat to the dominant of C minor in preparation for a full recapitulation of the first reprise?

The two versions of this completion take as their basic stance some contrasting answers to these questions. Version 1 is in a simple binary form: the second reprise gesturally mirrors the first, though much else changes. The violin accompanies the piano, but in ways that highlight its distinct identity motivically as well as timbrally. Version 2 is in a rounded binary form, with a central modulatory section after the double bar leading to a full recapitulation (though slightly truncated to avoid thematic redundancy) of the first reprise in the tonic from bars 41 to 64. The violin's accompaniment is more discreet in bars 1–16 (and in the later parallel passages) in this version. A more detailed account of the rationale of the completions is given below.

### **The source of the fragment**

The sole authentic source of the fragment is the single leaf of the autograph manuscript held in the Goethe und Schiller Archive of the Nationale Forschungs- und Gedenkstätten in Weimar, signature 493. (The manuscript was acquired by Goethe in the early nineteenth century and he wrote 'Mozart' in red ink on the top right of the recto page.) In the absence of a watermark, the paper type does not help date the fragment.

### **Completion 1**

The main concern of this completion was to balance improvisatory style with formal clarity and structural coherence. In keeping with the spirit of improvisation the violin part has some playful elements. These include a nod to J. S. Bach in bars 1–2, with an allusion to a theme that would have been familiar to van Swieten from his days as the Imperial Ambassador to the court of Frederick the Great. Some performers and listeners might find this a ludic step too far, and a more laconic alternative is provided for bars 1–2 and 28–9 in the *ossia* staves. In bars 7–15 the violin takes a sustaining role, but creates its own contours by shadowing different voices from the composite keyboard texture. From bar 16, where the style of Mozart's piano writing changes, there is more conventional dialogue writing for the violin. And in bars 21–2 the violin's role becomes neutrally accompanimental, in order to lead smoothly into Mozart's violin writing in bars 23–7. The fantasia style of Mozart's piano writing in bars 1–24 places an emphasis on the music's performative element. While the notation indicates the hyper-expressive potential of Mozart's ideas, the detailed

realisation of them is left to the performer. For this reason, no dynamic markings have been added; and while the suggested tempo indication ('Largo, con licenza') is not one which appears in any of Mozart's completed scores, it seems the appropriate instruction here. (Perhaps the more authentic way to indicate tempo would be merely 'Largo', 'Adagio' or even to leave it blank: a performer would have to be inexperienced or wilful to project the music in any other way.)

After the double bar the musical paragraph in bars 28–43 mirrors bars 1–15, but with many adjustments. (This is based on the premise that Mozart does not repeat himself in the second reprises of his two-part forms; instead, he 'reveals' some hidden potential of his ideas by varying them.) It is more tonally mobile, initially tracing an ascending pattern from E flat major, through F minor (bars 29–34) to G minor (bars 35–38) and thus expanding the shape of the bass line in bars 1–2 (a compositional device that was dear to both Mozart and C. P. E. Bach). The next phrase transforming G minor into G major (as the dominant of C minor) through a roundabout path in bars 38–43: first by descending through a descending sequence (G minor – F minor – E flat minor) in bars 38–40; then through a flatwards cycle of fifths in bars 40–43, leading to a first-inversion chord of D flat in bar 43 which initiates a Neapolitan progression onto the dominant of C minor at the end of the bar. (Compare the D flat chord with the 6-5 chord at the start of bar 15).

From bar 44 the music recapitulates bars 16–27 in C minor. This necessitates recomposition rather than simple transposition, in order to accommodate the minor mode and heighten some aspects of the music's expressivity. It takes into account Mozart's habitual practices in minor-mode recapitulations: the retention from the exposition of key melodic pitches in the treble, the chromatic intensification of foreground voice-leading elements, and – above all – a careful steering of the rhetoric between pathos and sentimentality. The short coda is motivated by two factors: (1) hitherto, the fragment and the completion have been short of interrupted cadences – one of the staples of eighteenth-century improvisatory style – and this completion speculates that Mozart may have been saving this gambit for the very end of the piece; (2) we know (from Mozart himself as well as from others who heard him improvise in the 1780s) that Mozart often saved a flamboyant twist in his performances for the end of a piece. Compare, for example, the end of the C minor Fantasia K. 475.

## **Completion 2**

The chief concerns of this completion are to test the potential of the material for more sustained formal development, and to experiment with a very constrained, discreet style of violin writing that looks back to models from the 1760s and early 1770s.

This completion has a distinct development section in bars 28–40. This part of the completion posed two challenges. How should it be tonally structured and how should it draw on the thematic material and rhetoric of bars 1–27? The first of these challenges is more easily met than the second. The tonal function of bars 28–40 is to progress from E flat major to G major (functioning as the dominant of C minor) in preparation for the recapitulation. It does this through three harmonic patterns: a descent through thirds (E flat minor, B minor, G minor) in bars 28–33<sup>1</sup>; a flatwards circle of fifths (A–D–G–C, modelled on bars 13–14) in bars 33<sup>3</sup>–35<sup>1</sup>; and a chromatic ascending sequence in the bass (C–G) in bars 33–37, leading to a dominant pedal in bars 38–40. Each of these patterns stems from

the material of the exposition and together they trace an overall trajectory which was one of the classical period's staple templates.<sup>2</sup>

But what of the development section's rhetoric? There was a primary choice to be made between (at least) five different models:

- 1) A gradual move from well-formed-ness (as established in bars 16–27) to the more broken, fragile continuity of the fantasy style (in readiness for the recapitulation)
- 2) A plan that reverses 1) above, so that the development begins by re-establishing the primacy of improvisatory rhetoric but progresses towards well-formed-ness as it approaches the resolution to the tonic at the start of the recapitulation
- 3) A development section that balances throughout the competing claims of improvisatory style and functional progress towards the recapitulation
- 4) A solution that prioritises improvisatory rhetoric completely, so that the development section has a (seemingly) loose, free relationship with the exposition
- 5) An emphasis on continuing the well-formed-ness of bars 16–27 throughout the development section, thereby focusing on continuity and technical coherence, but at the risk of sacrificing expressive intensity and consistency of tone.

The solution in this version falls somewhere between 2) and 3). Take, for example, bars 28–33. The threefold statement of the opening gesture is more well formed (through repetition) than the opening of the movement, but this is counter-balanced by the disorienting enharmonic and chromatic pivots between the three tonal areas of E flat minor, B minor and G minor – a harmonic labyrinth which can of course be emphasised by colour and agogics in performance – and by the variations to the foreground embellishments of the treble. (For an example of a progression of descending thirds in a more fluent context, see the start of the development section in the fourth movement of the Symphony in E flat K. 543, where the music rapidly moves from A flat major/minor, through E major/minor, to C major/minor in bars 108–124.) Conversely, the harmonic stability of the dominant pedal in bars 38–40 occurs beneath the only new thematic material in the development, and in bar 40 even that thematic continuity disintegrates, the messiness of the durations alluding to some of the notational idiosyncrasies in the Fantasia K. 475.<sup>3</sup>

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The first performance of Completion 1 was given by Alok Dutt (violin) and Timothy Jones (piano) at the DiMeno Centre in New York on 15 February 2017. The first performance of Completion 2 was given by Rachel Podger (violin) and Christopher Glynn (piano) at Kings Place London on 3 November 2020.

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Riepel called this pattern 'ponte'. It was one of his three tonal archetypes for second reprise sections. See W. Budday, *Grundlagen musikalischer Formen der Wiener Klassik an Hand der zeitgenössischen Theorie von J. Riepel und H. Chr. Koch dargestellt an Menuetten und Sontenformen (1750–1790)* (Kassel: 1983).

<sup>3</sup> See Eisen, C., and Wintle, C., 'Mozart's C minor Fantasy K. 475: An Editorial "Problem" and its Analytical and Critical Consequences', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 124 (1999), 26–52.