

Mozart: Fragment of a Concerto Allegro for Horn and Orchestra in E, Fr 1785k

Two Completions

Editorial Introduction

Basic description: The fragment is a 91-bar particella, consisting of a 65-bar opening ritornello and 26 bars of the first solo section. The fragment breaks off after the music has modulated to V and is standing on V/V in preparation for a subsidiary theme.

Source: An autograph manuscript in the Statsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz [Mus. Ms. Autogr. W. A. Mozart Anh. 98a]: two bifolia of 12-stave Querformat paper with all eight pages filled by Mozart's particella.

Date: Tyson dated the fragment to the period mid 1785–1791 based on the paper type of the manuscript. There is no corroborative evidence for the date, other than the fact that Mozart's completed horn concertos in 1786 (K 495) and 1787 (K 447) demonstrate his developing interest in the genre during the middle of the decade.

Commentary:

The scale of the opening ritornello (65 bars) is more ambitious than the parallel sections in the completed horn concertos – 24 bars in K 417, 42 bars (with a solo insertion) in K 495, and 28 bars in K 447. To maintain the proportions between the opening ritornello and the later formal components suggests a movement of over 300 bars. [The ratio of the opening ritornello to the entire first movement in the three completed concertos is not consistent -- 1:7 (K 417), 1:4 (K 495) and 1:5.5 (K 447). But even at the lower end of this range Fr 1785k would come in at 325 bars.] The scope of the fragment implies a first movement with a weight more associated with Mozart's piano concertos from the mid 1780s than with his completed horn concertos.

The opening ritornello of the fragment has a greater formal complexity than K 447 and K 495, and a similar thematic complexity to both those finished pieces. The thematic sweep of Mozart's concept is particularly impressive in bars 33–61. The ritornello is organised along the lines of Mozart's normal practice in the 1780s, with a chain of detachable but motivically related periods that have distinct formal functions in relation to the punctuation of the entire movement. (For example, self-sufficient periods that serve as middle ritornellos, and cadential material that can be expanded into extended phrases of virtuoso display in the solo sections. Most significantly, the opening ritornello lends itself to expansion through the insertion of new solo material (including the cadenza) in the recapitulatory section in the closing stages of the movement.

The texture and timbre of the fragment's opening ritornello is not, however, as sophisticated as the equivalent section in K 447. In particular, the sudden octaves in bars 22–3 and the broken oboe line in bars 37–40 carry some tension between the thematic concepts and their medium. [This judgement should be qualified by the fact that wind writing appears to be missing in bars 44–48, 59–61 and bar 65.] The absence of wind participation in the solo section (where the oboe and orchestral horn staves are left blank) suggests that as in K 495, Mozart intended the solo horn to be accompanied by strings only without being swamped by the timbre of the oboes and other horns.

The 26 bars of solo writing call for some agility (especially in bars 71–2, 77 and 91) and 'vocal' finesse. Mozart does not stray outside the range of pitches he deploys in the solo writing of K 417, K 495 and K 447, namely:

passage to introduce the cadenza in bars 284–288. (Most details are reworked in the recapitulation, not just transposed.) The final ritornello has a slightly more emphatic close than the opening ritornello with the addition two extra chords in bars 301–2.