

## Mozart, Fragment of a String Quintet in B flat Fr 1787j

### Three Completions

#### Editorial Introduction

The fragment consists of 122 bars of a piece for string quintet, scored for Mozart's customary ensemble of two violins, two violas and cello. It is the *particella* of a long and elaborate sonata-form exposition, breaking off at the double bar with a repeat sign. All five instruments are notated in bars 1–23, 38–46, 73–87, 92–99, and 112–115: these are some (though not all) of the crucial thematic and formal junctures of the exposition. Elsewhere the score is incomplete to varying degrees. At bars 37, 91, 116–18 and 122 four of the instrumental lines are notated; and in bars 88–90 and 111 three instruments are notated. Two voices (melody and bass) only are notated in bars 24–33 and 65–7. Only the first violin part is present in bars 34–6, 47–64, 68–72<sup>3</sup>, and 100–110: in each of these passages significant harmonic and/or contrapuntal activity is suggested by the single line. The task of the completions is therefore to realise the exposition's incomplete textures (a significant challenge where four of the voices are missing) and to supply a development section and exposition which balance the unusual size of the exposition and offer a coherent and stylistically plausible continuation of its musical substance.

The source of the fragment is an autograph manuscript now in the collection of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn Archiv (D:B, sig: Mus. Ms. Autogr. W. A. Mozart Anh. 80).<sup>1</sup> It consists of three leaves of *Querformat* 12-stave paper. There are two systems per page, and the fragment breaks off near the start of the second system on folio 3<sup>v</sup>. The autograph does not contain a tempo marking, but the nature of the ideas suggests a moderately fast *alla breve* pulse.<sup>2</sup> Although the document appears to be a composing manuscript – for example, a cancelled version of bar 24 at the end of f. 1<sup>r</sup> shows a completely different harmonic trajectory from its replacement at the top of f. 1<sup>v</sup> – it shows a remarkably confident touch both in the overall shape of the exposition, and in its detailed notation of articulation and expressive instructions.<sup>3</sup>

#### Date of the fragment

It is impossible to date the fragment with a high degree of accuracy. The manuscript carries no date, the piece is not mentioned in Mozart's correspondence, nor does it appear to have left any other trace in the contemporary record. But the physical evidence of the manuscript itself, together with circumstantial evidence, points to 1787. Alan Tyson discovered that the document shares a paper type with 18 other Mozart manuscripts – seven other fragments, and several finished compositions from that period including:

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<sup>1</sup> A facsimile of the autograph is published in NMA 10/30:4 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2002) pp 158–60.

<sup>2</sup> In this edition I have suggested a tempo marking of *Allegretto*, taking my cue from the first movement of the D-major String Quartet K. 499 (1786). In rehearsal, however, I have found that ensembles tend to play version 2 of the completion at a significantly more relaxed pace than version 1.

<sup>3</sup> With the exception of the corrected bar 24, this is an extremely 'clean' manuscript. Mozart seems to have been scrupulous about articulation marks throughout the fragment. There are many dynamic markings, but in comparison with the published scores of the 'Haydn' Quartets and the String Quintets in C major and G minor, the dynamic indications look less finished. Supplementary dynamic markings in this edition are given in cue-sized notation.

- *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* K. 525 (dated 10 August 1787 in Mozart's *Verzeiñuß aller meiner Werke*)
- the Sonata for piano and violin K. 526 (24 August 1787)
- the first four leaves of the Finale of the C-major String Quintet K. 515 (19 April 1787)
- leaf 5 (end of the second movement and start of the Finale) of the Horn Concerto K. 447 (1787?)
- pages 9–10 and 27–46 of *Ein musikalischer Spaß* K. 522 (14 June 1787)
- leaves 1–45 and 52–3 of Act 1 of *Don Giovanni* K. 527 (28 October 1787).<sup>4</sup>

The fact that Mozart completed two String Quintets during the Spring of 1787 (K. 515 on 19 April and K. 516 on 16 May) suggests that Fr 1787j was his attempt to start a third quintet to make up a set for publication.<sup>5</sup> But whether it predates or postdates the two completed quintets must be a matter of conjecture.<sup>6</sup> It may be relevant to ask why Mozart abandoned work on the fragment. Its style is in some respects close to the C major Quintet, with ample proportions, a leisurely pace of harmonic change, and a symphonic breadth in its motivic exposition. Given these similarities, it seems more likely that Mozart abandoned the fragment in favour of the even broader themes of the C major Quintet, rather than writing out the *particella* of the exposition of Fr1787j before realising it was too close to a work he had already completed. Indeed there are several faint echoes of the abandoned fragment in the first movement of K. 515.<sup>7</sup>

It is possible that Mozart also abandoned work on Fr1787j because he discovered uncomfortably close thematic links between the fragment and his only earlier String Quintet, K. 174 (December 1773). The short transition passage at the end of the first movement exposition of that work pits the first violin against the other four instruments:



This pattern returns in G minor at the start of the development section (bars 87–93), in its closing phrase (bars 116–120), and at the end of the recapitulation (bars 206–212). Although these appearances are brief, they occur at vital formal junctures, and the material sticks in the mind. It clearly stuck in Mozart's mind, for the same idea occurs in bars 43–8, 54–60, 80–85 and 91–104 in

<sup>4</sup> For a description of the paper, see Alan Tyson, *Wasserzeichen-Katalog* [NMA: X:33/2] (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1992), pp 24–25. Tyson catalogues it as type 55 (12-stave B).

<sup>5</sup> K. 515 and K. 516 were advertised in the *Wiener Zeitung* in April and June 1788 as components of a set of three quintets, completed by Mozart's arrangement of his windband Serenade K. 388. The three quintets were eventually published as a set of parts by Artaria in 1789.

<sup>6</sup> The correspondence between paper types in the Finale of K. 515 and Fr1787j cannot lead to the conclusion that the C major Quintet was completed before Mozart began work on the fragment. The three leaves of the fragment's autograph are – according to Tyson's analysis – three quarters of a double bifolium which originated from a single sheet of paper. The 'missing' fourth leaf is a quadrant identical to the single leaf of this paper type in the autograph manuscript of the Horn Concerto K. 447. Whether that leaf is the missing quadrant is a matter for further research. Even if it were to be established that all four leaves in question were originally attached together, thus providing a potential *terminus post quem* for work on the fragment, it would not help date the fragment with any more precision because the date of K. 447 is itself conjectural.

<sup>7</sup> Compare, for example, bars 86–98 (K. 515) with bars 64–79 (Fr1787j); bars 101–4 (K. 515) with bars 86–9 (Fr1787j); and bars 119–23 (K. 515) with bars 43–6 (Fr1787j).

the fragment. While Mozart was not averse to reusing themes from earlier works at this point in his life – one thinks especially of the rondo of the Piano Concerto K. 503 (4 December 1786) using material from the ballet music for *Idomeneo* and from the Symphony in B flat K. 319 – he usually did so across genres, not in two works in the same genre (let alone the same key). The re-used theme in Fr1787j seems more like an accidental *Ohrwurm* than a deliberate reaching back to the earlier Quintet.