

Wolfgang Amadé Mozart (1756–1791)

The Piano Concertos

Mozart's great symphonies have not been surpassed, nor have his great concertos and great operas been equalled – or at least they were not in their time, since Haydn never completely mastered either of the last two genres. Furthermore, in Mozart's production, concertos and operas were particularly closely related, a relation not found elsewhere in Mozart or in any other composer. Who, to the same extent as he, became famous in both the concerto and the opera? Not Wagner, not Verdi, not Mussorgsky, not Debussy, not Richard Strauss. Perhaps Alban Berg, and just possibly Beethoven.

We must first ask ourselves why and how, alone in his period, Mozart raised these two genres to a unique degree of excellence (let us remember that, for him, "concerto" meant essentially the piano concerto, the final work for clarinet being the exception that proves the rule). Was his music more dramatic than that of Joseph Haydn? Yet in the instrumental field it was Haydn who, without the use of soloists or voices, showed the greater dramatic qualities, with abrupt silences, contrasts, and irregularities – in short, *coups de théâtre* that make the attentive listener start, if not lose his stability. Did Wolfgang have more psychological acumen? But Haydn had as much, and in symphonies and quartets was unrivaled in lighting a given idea in different ways, depending on its place and role in his overall conception. As for instrumental virtuosity and sensitivity to timbres, though Mozart performed in public from childhood and his fame as an interpreter on one instrument (the piano) was much greater than that of Haydn, it was the latter who asked his instrumentalists, and especially his horn players or cellists (and the violinists in his quartets), to accomplish often greater feats, some even stamped with the seal of extravagance (at least for the period): these frequently go *against* the instrument, in the sense that Mahler meant. And unlike the symphonies of Mozart, those of Haydn prior to the "London" Symphonies often include extended passages for soloists. Finally, did Mozart have special affinities with the piano? If Haydn's piano concertos – even the last, in D major, published in 1784 – do not bear comparison with those of Mozart from this viewpoint, the same cannot be said when we closely examine another long neglected area of the output of the Esterháza Kapellmeister: his trios for piano, violin and cello, most of which were written after 1790. It is not by chance that Cuthbert Girdlestone, the well known specialist on Mozart's concertos, or Charles Rosen, a pianist and expert on the Viennese classical style, wrote about these trios in particularly glowing terms.

Thus, in both Haydn and Mozart we can admire the composer's dramatic sensitivity and psychological penetration. Indeed, before Beethoven they alone were able to draw all the inferences from a style implying these two qualities. They alone were able to respond to the dialectical requirements of symmetry with contrast, of articulation without categorization, of stability with the unexpected made by what was much later called sonata form. Each did so in his own way, and here we come upon the irreducibility of individual genius. Conversely, scores apparently the most distant from each other attain the same degree of depth. The British musicologist Sir Donald Tovey, to whom Charles Rosen's book on the classical style repeatedly renders homage, once noted that Haydn and Beethoven condensed into a single symphonic movement an entire three act opera. This judicious remark can be set beside Rosen's that in the "Oxford" Symphony (1789), one of Haydn's greatest, "the recapitulation seems to be made up of separate small bits of the exposition, like a mosaic, but the spirit that put the pieces together had a tough, dynamic conception of the total controlling rhythm that even Mozart could rarely obtain outside opera" – or, one might add, the concerto.

We must now talk about tonality and say more about instrumentation. In long periods (in the technical sense) Mozart tended to enrich a basically stable harmonic foundation by small touches here and there. Haydn, on the contrary, changed the harmonic foundation more frequently, with quick modulations to the dominant, giving an immediate impression of frenzied exploration demanding at the end of the movement, in order to re establish the balance, a completely new presentation of the material, an irregular recapitulation. The *quid pro quo* in Haydn is that there is less complexity at any given time, an effect strengthened by always admirable but occasionally austere sonorities. In Mozart, on the other hand, we see the triumph of simultaneous musical expression of the most dissimilar feelings (in operas, of course, but also elsewhere) and of the treatment on an equal footing of the piano and the orchestra, opposed to each other and merged together as never before (in concertos), the whole being compensated by a clearer, large scale symmetry but reinforced by a sensuousness of timbre that Mozart had inherited from Johann Christian Bach, his most evident predecessor in the field of the piano concerto. Insofar as Mozart conceived tonality “as a mass, a large area of energy which can encompass and resolve the most contradictory opposing forces” [Rosen], he was able not only to adapt the harmonic treatment to the stage action and dialogue by slowing it down but also and above all to avoid divesting the episodes of their wealth and dimensions, asking (in keeping with the musical language and conventions of the time) for a minimum of stability and attachment to the tonic, as in the orchestral expositions of the concertos and (sometimes) in opera arias and in the last sections of opera finales.

In a Mozart concerto, our feeling that the pianist behaves like a character in an opera does not come solely from his presence or from the opposition between soloist and orchestra, but from a dramatization of this behavior on several levels. We wait for the entry of the soloist from the beginning of the orchestral exposition (which therefore must strongly differ from the opening of a symphony), and, as soon as he stops, each of his reappearances becomes an event. This is a different conception from that of the baroque era and even from that of much of Haydn, when no one was autonomous, when the orchestra, seeing the soloist play on his own, temporarily quieted down in order to give him greater prominence and later continued the concerto with him (the viewpoint remained the same if several soloists were involved).

For the young Mozart, the emancipation of the soloist was already a *fait accompli*. Mozart’s problem was to emancipate the orchestra in order to obtain two separate but equal partners. Everyone knows how magnificently he succeeded in the concerto and in the opera – where we need only replace the soloist by a singer. From the period of suspense (linked with the existence of a main character) results, for the orchestral introduction, the double requirement of existing and of being neither too short nor too long and, for the piano, that of surprising the listener and of avoiding any paraphrase of the orchestral exposition, without however diverging too far from it. These requirements were all met by Mozart, and in each concerto in a different way. His orchestral expositions are a source of stability and propriety, remaining dense and capable of sustaining the entire movement without making us forget, through excess zeal, the imminence of even more dramatic gestures.

There remains what may well be the most important. In his concertos Mozart brings to life (whether as reminders or as foretokens) specific characters from his operas, and he even succeeds in setting precise situations or scenes that we recognize from having seen them so often on the stage: the two couples in the garden in *Così fan tutte* in the 22nd Concerto, Barbarina and the Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro* in the 23rd and 24th respectively, Don Giovanni’s party in the 25th, and Elvira in the 26th. Mozart was not alone in proceeding in this manner, for Leonora and Florestan – to cite only one example – can be found in Beethoven’s instrumental output, but no other composer ever showed this type of relationship so clearly and with such expressive intensity.

Mozart made his debut in the piano concerto with a series of arrangements of works by others: seven in all, four in 1767 and three probably in 1772. Only those from 1767 are included in the traditional number sequence because they were long believed to be entirely original works. In 1908, however, Wyzewa and Saint Foix determined that they were arrangements of works by Johann Schobert (c. 1735–1767), by Leontzi Honauer (1735–?), by Hermann Ferdinand Raupach (1728–1778), by Johann Gottfried Eckard (1735–1809), and – they believed – by a certain Legrand. All of these were international virtuosos and pioneers of keyboard music who had settled in Paris, where Wolfgang and Leopold met them in 1764 and 1766. In 1767 father and son were back in Salzburg preparing for a stay in Vienna, and the need for a concert repertoire explains all four works. In them Wolfgang did not limit himself to distributing the original musical material between soloist and orchestra but filled it out here and there with variants of his own.

Concerto No. 1 in F major, K. 37

1. *Allegro*
2. *Andante*
3. *Allegro*

Concerto No. 2 in B flat major, K. 39

1. *Allegro spiritoso*
2. *Andante*
3. *Molto Allegro*

Concerto No. 3 in D major, K. 40

1. *Allegro maestoso*
2. *Andante*
3. *Presto*

Concerto No. 4 in G major, K. 41

1. *Allegro*
2. *Andante*
3. *Molto Allegro*

In *Concerto No. 1 in F major, K. 37* (April 1767) the Allegro was based on the first movement of Raupach's Sonata No. 5, and the Rondo on that of Honauer's Op. 1 No. 3; the Andante is the only movement of the twelve that has not been identified.

The manuscript of *Concerto No. 2 in B flat major, K. 39* (June 1767) is almost entirely in Leopold's handwriting; the two outer movements were drawn from Raupach's Sonata No. 1, while the central movement was drawn from Schobert's Op. 17 No. 2: the first movement is more evolved than that of the previous concerto.

The initial Allegro maestoso of *Concerto No. 3 in D major, K. 40* was based on Honauer's Sonata Op. 2 No. 1 and the Andante on Eckard's Sonata Op. 11 No. 4; the remarkable closing Presto came not from Legrand (as Wyzewa and Saint Foix thought) but from Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (a keyboard piece entitled La Böhmer, from W.117).

Concerto No. 4 in G major, K. 41 is perhaps the most beautiful of the four; the two outer movements were drawn from Honauer's Sonata Op. 1 No. 1, and the Andante in G minor from Raupach's Sonata No. 1.

His first four entirely original concertos (Salzburg 1773–1777) for piano and orchestra form not a group but four isolated works, the first and last of which (Nos. 5 and 9) are quite ambitious while the two central ones (Nos. 6 and 8) are rather modest.

Concerto No. 5 in D major, K. 175

1. *Allegro*
2. *Andante ma un poco Adagio*
3. *Allegro*

Concerto No. 5 in D major, K. 175 was composed by Mozart in December 1773, probably for himself (he was nearly 18). It is a brilliant work without an equivalent at the time. The orchestra includes trumpets and timpani.

The opening *Allegro* displays a rather feverish ardor and rushes constantly onward. After a slow movement in G major, the *Allegro* finale moves at a true *opera buffa* pace, without however disdaining contrapuntal figures. This is one of the many works in which Mozart showed both know how and complete ease. He was especially proud of this concerto and played it in Vienna several times a decade later.

Concerto No. 6 in B flat major, K. 238

1. *Allegro aperto*
2. *Andante un poco Adagio*
3. *Rondeau. Allegro*

Concerto No. 6 in B flat major, K. 238 dates from January 1776. During the preceding year Mozart had written his five violin concertos, one after another. The 6th Piano Concerto is more timid not only than the 5th but also than the last of the violin concertos (i.e. the A major, K. 219, of December 1775). The main reason for this timidity seems to have been that Mozart did not write it for himself but for a member of the Salzburg aristocracy. This hypothesis is all the likelier because 1776 was the year in which Wolfgang most tried to gain access to the salons of his native city.

The beginning of the *Allegro aperto* of the 6th Concerto makes one think – but this may be mere chance – of Michael Haydn’s violin concerto in the same key written in 1760. The *Andante* is in E-flat, and the *Allegro* finale is in rondo form.

Concerto No. 8 in C major, K. 246

1. *Allegro aperto*
2. *Andante*
3. *Rondeau. Tempo di Minuetto*

Concerto No. 8 in C major, K. 246 was composed in April 1776 for Countess Lützow, one of Leopold’s pupils. This concerto may be more “gallant” than K. 238, but its *Allegro aperto* contains a theme (played by the piano, never by the orchestra) that Mozart took up again in two later C major Concertos, Nos. 13 (K. 415) and 25 (K. 503). The slow movement is in F major, and, as often happened in French music of the time and also in Christian Bach, the finale is a minuet in rondo form.

Concerto No. 9 in E flat major, K. 271

1. *Allegro*
2. *Andantino*
3. *Rondeau. Presto*

Mozart then ignored the concerto genre for several months, not returning to it until January 1777 with one of his greatest masterpieces, *Concerto No. 9 in E flat major, K. 271*, written not for a local celebrity but for Mademoiselle Jeunehomme, a French pianist who was passing through Salzburg. With his K. 271 Mozart brought the piano concerto into the modern era, and it is not impossible to see in Miss Jeunehomme the foreigner personifying for Wolfgang (who was more or less a prisoner in Salzburg) the freedom and unconventionality of the outside world. In K. 271 for the first time Mozart handled with genius all of the elements of his mature style.

From the opening measures he masterfully solved two basic problems raised by the concerto genre: the first entry of the soloist – the dramatic event par excellence – and the double exposition (that of the orchestra alone and that with the solo instrument). The very first measures oppose twice, laconically but effectively, orchestra and soloist, a solution (immediate entry of the soloist) which Mozart never repeated but which Beethoven used on two occasions. The pianist then remains silent, though he never leaves the listener's mind. He suddenly re-enters with a trill before the orchestral exposition is over (another shock). The solo exposition is very unlike the first and modulates to the dominant. All of the high points of intensity in this movement reach D flat, a sort of center of gravity not unrelated to F minor, which is also present.

There follows an *Andantino* in C minor, the first slow movement in minor in a Mozart concerto, and it is tragic, even hopeless.

The closing *Presto* in rondo form is interrupted in the middle – like that of the 22nd Concerto (in the same key) – by a minuet in A flat marked *Cantabile*: a moment of relaxation in a brilliant, ebullient movement.

Rondo for Piano and Orchestra in D major, K. 382

In 1779, after returning to Salzburg from his long trip to Mannheim and Paris, Mozart composed for himself and his sister a two-piano concerto (No. 10 in E flat major, K. 365). He then wrote no more concertos for three years. In 1781 he set himself up as an independent musician in Vienna, where he was to spend the remaining ten years of his life. His successful performances there as a pianist necessarily brought him back to the concerto genre. In March 1782 he wrote the *Rondo for Piano and Orchestra in D Major, K. 382*, which was conceived as a new finale to the 5th Concerto (indeed the oldest published scores of this concerto included this rondo, not the original finale, as the last movement).

* * * * *

Then at the end of 1782 and in the beginning of 1783 he wrote three concertos for the subscription concerts he had decided to give: No. 11 (K. 413), No. 12 (K. 414) and No. 13 (K. 415). These three works were therefore composed for a large public, and Mozart himself characterized them very precisely in a letter to his father dated December 28, 1782: "These concertos represent a happy medium between the too easy and the too difficult: they are very brilliant, pleasing to the ear, and natural without being vapid. There are passages in them from which connoisseurs alone can derive satisfaction, but there are also passages written in such a way that the less learned cannot fail to be pleased, although without realizing why." These concertos were originally conceived for an orchestra including – as well as the strings – two oboes, two bassoons and two horns (plus two trumpets and timpani, in the case of K. 415), but, as the composer would point out in a letter to the Parisian publisher Sieber on April 26, 1783, "They can be performed merely *a quattro*" – that is, only by the strings. Mozart again mentioned these concertos in a letter to his father dated January 4, 1783, and on the 15th of the same month the *Wiener Zeitung* announced their forthcoming publication (in fact they did not come out until March 1785).

Concerto No. 12 in A major, K. 414 (K. 386a)

1. *Allegro*
2. *Andante*
3. *Allegretto*

Rondo in A major, K. 386

The first completed (in autumn 1782) was *Concerto No. 12 in A major, K. 414 (K. 386a)*, certainly the most beautiful of the three. From the opening *Allegro* we find the vibrant sensuousness of the works of Mozart's maturity in this exceptional key (cf. the earlier 29th Symphony from April 1774), and this poetic mood is intensified in the *Andante* in D major, an explicit homage to Christian Bach, for its main theme was drawn from the overture to one of Bach's operas, *La Calamità de' Cuori* (February 1763). The beginning of the final *Allegretto* is rather like that of the first movement, and soon a tender melody gives us a foretaste of the world of Don Giovanni. The *Rondo in A Major, K. 386*, completed on October 19, 1782, may well have been the original finale to the 12th Concerto.

Concerto No. 11 in F major, K. 413 (K. 387a)

1. *Allegro*
2. *Larghetto*
3. *Tempo di Menuetto*

The other two concertos of this group were probably finished at the beginning of 1783. *Concerto No. 11 in F major, K. 413 (K. 387a)* much resembles the concertos of Christian Bach. With the initial *Allegros* of Mozart's 14th and 24th concertos, the opening movement of K. 413 counts among the few first movements in triple time in his piano concertos. One of the many themes recalls Sarti's aria "Com' un agnello", a melody Mozart would use again in a contredanse and above all in the banquet scene of *Don Giovanni*. The *Larghetto* in B flat is centered on melodic beauty, and the finale, like that to the 8th Concerto, is a minuet in rondo form: perhaps to make up for its light aspect, it uses polyphonic writing, and each of the reappearances of the refrain is subtly varied, whether melodically or harmonically.

Concerto No. 13 in C major, K. 415 (K. 387b)

1. *Allegro*
2. *Andante*
3. *Allegro*

Concerto No. 13 in C major, K. 415 (K. 387b), because of its opening in canon and its heroic, martial ambience, rises distinctly above the usual *œuvre de circonstance*. The orchestral exposition ends with a brief fanfare which is the object of a dramatic, typically Mozartean extension at the end of the solo exposition and again just before the cadenza.

For the slow movement Mozart first sketched a few measures in C minor but then wrote a more tender *Andante* in F major. The main theme is ornamented differently each time it reappears.

The closing *Allegro* seems much more complex and merges the principles of the concerto with those of the rondo sonata. Indeed, the orchestral exposition – the first phrase of which is in fact given to the piano – acts as the refrain in the tonic and is followed (first episode) by an *Adagio* in C minor in 2/4 rather than the earlier 6/8. Then comes the solo exposition, again in 6/8 and at the initial tempo: this exposition acts here as the refrain. After a central episode in minor, the recapitulation (refrain) quietly introduces a secondary theme. Shortly before the last measures, the *Adagio* in minor returns once more.

* * * * *

In the three years 1784 – 1786 Mozart wrote twelve piano concertos, six in 1784 alone. These twelve masterpieces form a group comparable to Haydn's twelve "London" Symphonies (which were not composed until some ten years later). The evolution from the 14th and 15th Concertos to the 24th and 25th is astounding. For that matter, an event of capital importance to Mozart's career had taken place in the meantime: the composition and performances of *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Concerto No. 14 in E flat major, K. 449

1. *Allegro vivace*
2. *Andantino*
3. *Allegro ma non troppo*

Concerto No. 14 in E flat major, K. 449 is the first work inscribed in the thematic catalogue that Mozart decided to keep for himself, and it bears the date February 9, 1784. As in the three preceding concertos, the wind instrument parts are ad libitum. Actually the 14th Concerto had been started at the same time as the three of the winter of 1782 – 1783 and then set aside for a year, but here the wind parts are much more interesting.

The *Allegro vivace* draws its unstable character from the contradiction existing between, on the one hand, its martial aspect and, on the other, its 3/4 time signature and especially its constant modulations. The rather late entry of the piano changes the lighting of the whole, and the movement proceeds to a virile conclusion.

The *Andantino* in B flat experiments as to form: once the solo exposition has been heard, it is repeated in its entirety in the key of the flattened leading tone – that is, A flat, a tonality sufficiently remote to give the effect of a development.

Nevertheless, the most extraordinary movement is the final *Allegro ma non troppo*. As a contrapuntal movement it lies midway between those of the 5th and 19th Concertos, and it effects a marvelous synthesis of polyphonic art and *opera buffa* style.

Concerto No. 15 in B flat major, K. 450

1. *Allegro*
2. *Andante*
3. *Allegro*

Mozart wrote this 14th Concerto for his pupil Barbara Ployer. Three more concertos followed within two months, another (No. 17) for her plus two (Nos. 15 and 16) for himself – and he therefore strewed the latter two with difficulties, particularly the first. *Concerto No. 15 in B flat major, K. 450* is dated March 15, 1784, and Mozart wrote his sister that it contained everything to make the pianist perspire. In it we find, for example, many parallel thirds. From an orchestral viewpoint, this concerto marked a milestone: not content with asking specifically for wind instruments, it placed them right in the foreground.

This is evident from the opening of the *Allegro*, the oboe and bassoon sonorities of which recall a serenade or divertimento. In spite of its passages in minor, this movement breathes a joy of living and a gaiety rare in Mozart, and its themes are lightly but clearly drawn.

The *Andante* in E flat (a theme, two variations and coda) is a supreme example both of the art of ornamentation and of piano/orchestra dialogue. The mood remains serene except in the coda.

The final *Allegro* in 6/8, in which a flute is added, first sounds symphonic, especially because of a stylized hunting call (which is not, however, heard again until the end). The atmosphere is extremely brilliant, and the cadenza (Mozart's own) very complex.

Concerto No. 16 in D major, K. 451

1. *Allegro*
2. *Andante*
3. *Allegro di molto*

Concerto No. 16 in D major, K. 451, dated March 22, 1784 also symbolizes that happy time scarcely over a month long (February 26-April 3) during which Mozart gave no fewer than 22 concerts! As in the 5th Concerto in the same key and in the 13th Concerto, the score calls for trumpets and timpani. This second "perspiratory" concerto is as joyful as its predecessor but more ardent, more passionate. Aside from any question of value (cf. the Posthorn Serenade of 1779) it is probably Mozart's first work in D major that is *not* above all festive music.

The 16th Concerto begins with the same typically Mozartean rhythmic formula as the 13th, evoking an aristocratic march (this formula was also to appear at the beginning of the 18th and 19th Concertos and, with a trill on the second note, at the beginning of the 17th). The *Allegro assai* has a symphonic scope not found in any earlier Mozart concerto.

When Mozart's sister received a copy of this concerto, she found the piano writing of one passage in the *Andante* in G major too bare: Mozart therefore sent her a richer version, thus suggesting that he often noted down only a "skeleton" upon which the pianist (especially if he was the pianist) could elaborate.

The closing *Allegro di molto* in rondo form has an irresistible *élan*.

Concerto No. 17 in G major, K. 453

1. *Allegro*
2. *Andante*
3. *Allegretto*

Concerto No. 17 in G major, K. 453, Mozart's only concerto in this key (K. 41 and K. 107 No. 2 had been transcriptions), was finished on April 12, 1784. Since the 9th Concerto, none had presented such a varied range of emotions: before this Mozart had been as joyful but never as profound, never as ambiguous. In many ways this work foreshadows Beethoven's 4th Concerto (in the same key).

The opening *Allegro* is one of Mozart's most prettily colored yet emotionally complex movements. The second theme in the orchestral exposition is surprisingly agitated and unstable, and the ritornello later descends to the flatted submediant (E flat). Throughout this movement the minor mode plays an important role.

The *Andante* in C major continues along the same lines even more daringly: the orchestral ritornello starts with a quiet phrase five measures long followed by a silence. "Then the orchestra softly begins... an unrelated oboe solo, as if the first phrase had never existed". [Rosen] At its entry the piano amplifies this dramatic stroke.

The *Allegretto* finale is in the form of a theme and variations. The theme is as carefree as Papageno in *The Magic Flute*. The first three variations present progressively shorter note values, thereby giving an impression of acceleration. The fourth is in minor and is intensely chromatic; the very rhythmic fifth fills a cadential function. The movement ends with a coda marked *Presto*, a whirlwind in opera buffa style.

Concerto No. 18 in B flat major, K. 456

1. *Allegro vivace*
2. *Andante un poco sostenuto*
3. *Allegro vivace*

Two concertos date from late 1784, that important period when Mozart joined the Freemasons and met (or became better acquainted with) Joseph Haydn. Completed on September 30, *Concerto No. 18 in B flat major, K. 456* was written for the blind pianist Maria Theresia Paradies, one of Leopold Kozeluch's pupils, Mozart played it himself on February 12, 1785, on which occasion his father described it as "a glorious concerto... composed for Mlle Paradies for [her trip to] Paris". In April 1784 during an earlier trip to the French capital Maria Theresia Paradies had played Haydn's Concerto in G Major.

Mozart's 18th Concerto has the same gaiety as the 15th (in the same key), particularly in the outer movements (two *Allegro vivace*), and both finales are in 6/8 time. But the *Andante* in G minor in the form of a theme and variations borrows the somber aspects of the 17th Concerto and makes them tragic, even poignant: the feeling of disquiet is constantly intensified, and the fourth variation (in major, with wind coloring) represents no more than a short break in the clouds. Drama returns with the fifth variation and the coda.

Concerto No. 19 in F major, K. 459

1. *Allegro vivace*
2. *Allegretto*
3. *Allegro assai*

Finished on December 11, 1784 *Concerto No. 19 in F major, K. 459* is the first work with orchestra in which Mozart showed the world that he had thoroughly assimilated both Joseph Haydn and Johann Sebastian Bach. In 1783 he had noted down the openings of three Haydn symphonies, including No. 47 in G Major (1772). Now it is precisely to the rhythm of its opening that Mozart starred all four of his Concertos Nos. 16 through 19. It appears clear that in this concerto (one of Mozart's most marvelous scores) he especially remembered Haydn's symphony. In the final measures of the development of the initial *Allegro* the march rhythm takes on an unforgettable harmonic cast again drawn directly from Haydn's 47th. Both works also have in common a secondary theme in triplets. But to the outward tranquillity of the 19th Concerto is added real inner unrest. The second movement, an *Allegretto* in C major, gracefully combines lyricism and melancholy. As for the final *Allegro assai*, Charles Rosen calls it "the greatest of all Mozart's concerto finales". In it a synthesis is reached of the lightest and densest forms of music: the opening theme, drawn from the finale of Haydn's Symphony No. 78 (1782), is at once followed by a masterful fugue for full orchestra and later by a concluding theme foretelling Papageno's and Papagena's duet from *The Magic Flute*. Pianistic virtuosity, symphonic writing, learned procedures, operatic style, everything is here! It has rarely been pointed out that in *Ein musikalischer Spass*, K. 522 of June 1787 Mozart poked fun not only at others but also at himself, for the last movement of K. 522 (also in F major) is a true parody of that of K. 459. And how astonishing to hear, in the middle of the finale of the 19th Concerto, a double fugue in D minor juxtaposing the fugue theme already presented and the theme of the very first measures: the spirit of Bach plus the spirit of Haydn!

Concerto No. 20 in D minor, K. 466

1. *Allegro*
2. *Romance*
3. *Rondo. Allegro assai*

The key of the double fugue of the *19th Concerto* forms the link to *Concerto No. 20 in D minor, K. 466* dated February 10, 1785, the first of the two concertos Mozart wrote during that year and the first of his two concertos (the other being No. 24) in a minor key. As in the case of other renowned works we have trouble knowing, when listening to the 20th Concerto, whether we are hearing it or its reputation. Indeed, this is the concerto which Beethoven played and for which he wrote cadenzas. Furthermore, it is almost the only one that was known during the 19th century, for it was regarded solely as a romantic, haunted work in the style of *Don Giovanni*.

On the day he completed the 20th Concerto, Mozart saw his father arrive from Salzburg. On the following day, February 11, Wolfgang played the new work in public. And on February 12, a Saturday, took place in Mozart's apartment the famous gathering at which Joseph Haydn heard the last three of the six quartets that Mozart would dedicate to him several months later; this was also the occasion on which Haydn told the delighted Leopold that his son was "the greatest composer known to me either in person or by name".

With the 20th Concerto, created in this exceptional biographical context, Mozart wanted particularly to learn how much weight could be borne by the concerto genre. This resulted in music that is valiant but unstable: for instance the syncopations of the opening (which even seep into the main theme), straight out of Gluck's *Alceste* and announcing those in *Don Giovanni*, or the relations between soloist and orchestra, using material that is similar but never identical, always reshaped. The unifying factors are no less important. Chromatic progressions and parallel chords color the whole work.

The tragic mood, the accelerations, and the asymmetric periods of the two outer movements (marked *Allegro* and *Allegro assai*) are also found in the stormy central episode in G minor of the slow movement (a *Romanza* in B flat). The basic instability of this music is also shown by the refusal of the closing theme of the finale to choose, during its second appearance, between the major and minor modes. The first time the choice is decided in favor of F major, and the third time the outcome is D major – on the brink of the triumphant peroration of a score unique among Mozart's concertos and even in his entire orchestral output.

Concerto No. 21 in C major, K. 467

1. (*Allegro maestoso*)

2. *Andante*

3. *Allegro vivace assai*

Completed on March 9, 1785 *Concerto No. 21 in C major, K. 467* followed the 20th as closely as the "Jupiter" Symphony followed the G minor. Like the 20th it calls for trumpets and timpani. On several occasions during his career Mozart adopted the key of C major for the last work of a series, and it is quite possible to envision the 21st Concerto as the end of a series inaugurated with the 14th.

The opening *Allegro* starts with a theme whose martial grandeur, emphasized in measures 7 and 8 by a fanfare of woodwinds, brass and timpani, is not without elegance. From an overall viewpoint, grandeur allies itself in the 21st Concerto with well drawn, striking themes. The ambience usually remains affirmative, but the solo exposition contains a surprise: before establishing the dominant, G major, we hear on the piano a theme in G minor that does not recur and that, to all intents and purposes, is the theme of the beginning of the G minor Symphony of 1788. Another unforgettable moment is the chromatic ascension in measures 260–264, shortly before the end of the development, which sounds as if it will never stop but ends by catching on a high E flat, before redescending.

The famous *Andante* in F major, with muted strings and a pizzicato bass, mixes smiles and tears, and the finale proceeds like an *opera buffa*, although thematically it is quite different.

* * * * *

The three concertos from the winter of 1785–1786 unquestionably constitute a special group. These are the only Mozart concertos requiring clarinets, and they were composed in the immediate neighborhood of *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Concerto No. 22 in E flat major, K. 482

1. *Allegro*
2. *Andante*
3. *Rondo. Allegro*

Concerto No. 22 in E flat major, K. 482 dates from December 16, 1785. Mozart played it before the end of that month and – an exceptional occurrence – was obliged to encore the *Andante*. Unlike the earlier concertos in the same key (Nos. 9 and 14), this one uses trumpets and timpani.

None of Mozart's concertos has a more massive orchestral introduction than the 22nd (even that of the 25th is less so): this results from the combination of tonality and orchestration, and one cannot help thinking of the second act of *Figaro*. This introduction, which is only 76 measures long, offers no less than eleven themes in the tonic! Thereupon, for 17 measures the piano "takes off" on its own. The orchestra then returns with the majestic opening theme, drawn from Christian Bach (Symphony Op. 18 No. 1, in E flat) and from Mozart himself (Symphony in E flat, K. 132), leading this time to a dialogue.

In the *Andante* in C minor (cf. the 9th Concerto), the timbres are sharply separated into three groups: strings, piano, and winds. It is a theme and variations, or rather it combines the rondo and the variation forms. The three instrumental groups contribute to the listener's recognition of this form, thereby underlining the importance assumed in K. 482 by timbres. The episode in C major, during which the piano remains silent, presents a dialogue between flute and bassoon, reminding us of a soprano aria from *Figaro*.

The closing *Allegro* in 6/8 is in rondo form. The second (central) episode suddenly leads to an *Andantino cantabile* in A flat and in 3/4, a sort of slow minuet (cf. the 9th concerto, except that here the melody is much less ornate, much purer). The piano chats with the wind instruments, and one imagines oneself in a scene from *Così fan tutte*: the listener realizes that a passage like this one, in which the dialogue is ecstatic and time seems to stand still, would be inconceivable in a symphony. In the final measures of the movement, new inventions constantly postpone the conclusion, a procedure similar to the earlier one but using the opposite means.

Concerto No. 23 in A major, K. 488

1. *Allegro*
2. *Adagio*
3. *Allegro assai*

The next two concertos barely preceded the first performance of *Figaro* (May 1, 1786). *Concerto No. 23 in A major, K. 488*, which was finished on March 2, 1786, had been begun during the winter of 1784–1785 or even during that of 1783–1784: its first sketches did not call for the clarinets; in the final version the clarinets do not supplement the oboes but replace them, as in K. 482. Between 1779 and 1791 the 23rd Concerto shared its tonality with only five other important works: among these were another Piano Concerto (No. 12) and two scores with solo clarinet.

Formally less complex than usual, the 23rd Concerto is an uninterrupted flow of melody, partway between happiness and poignancy, without ever permitting the disappearance of an aura as luminous, warm, and radiant as it is discreet. The singing second theme of the *Allegro* does not modulate but has brilliant rhythmic bounce. While opening unexpected depths, its descending treatment recalls the simultaneous monologues of the characters during *Figaro* or *Così* ensembles.

The *Adagio* in 6/8, a transfigured *sicilienne*, is Mozart's only piece in F sharp minor and his last slow movement in a minor key. The clarinet's sextuplets accompanying the second theme are especially memorable, as are the string pizzicati against the long holds (piano and winds) at the end: the intense yet sublimated distress recalls Barbarina's aria in F minor at the beginning of the fourth act of *Figaro*.

The *Allegro assai* in rondo form brings us back to earth faster than almost any other composition by Mozart. The piano introduces a leaping theme. This is then taken up by the orchestra, which adds five more themes to it (although none of the five reappear until the coda). The whole is a continuous adventure (cf. the clarinet's mischievous melody in D major during the second episode), without a single glance backward: indeed, between the second and third episodes the rondo subject is entirely ignored! The conclusion displays a degree of physical energy rare in Mozart.

Concerto No. 24 in C minor, K. 491

1. *Allegro*
2. *Larghetto*
3. *Allegretto*

Concerto No. 24 in C minor, K. 491 was completed on March 24, 1786 and requires the largest orchestra (including oboes and clarinets, trumpets and timpani) that Mozart ever used in this genre. Less theatrical than the other concerto in a minor key (No. 20), this one nevertheless has solemn grandeur. The theme and variations of its last movement recall a passage in the Act IV finale to *Figaro*, but the opera above all announced by K. 491 is *The Magic Flute* (in particular the chorale of the Armed Men).

The *Allegro* opens by an angular melody (with diminished sevenths) played in unison. The treatment is linear and gives real importance to intervals. There are many melodic ideas, but they are short, somewhat neutral, and especially characterized by timbre. The dimensions are vaster than usual, with not one but two closing cadences separated by a passage over sixty measures long presenting new themes and above all a spectacular modulation into E flat minor.

The *Larghetto* in E flat major at first resembles the corresponding movement in the 20th concerto but, unlike it, remains calm throughout, as ethereal as parts of the Countess's role in *Figaro*. It is a rondo with two episodes: the first is in C minor (with numerous woodwind solos making it almost a sublimated serenade) and the second in A-flat major.

The *Allegretto* finale is a march theme with eight variations, the first five of which are increasingly threatening. Then follow the only variation in major, a return to minor, the cadenza, and the conclusion, no longer in 2/2 but in 6/8.

Concerto No. 25 in C major, K. 503

1. *Allegro maestoso*
2. *Andante*
3. *Allegretto*

The last three concertos were conceived separately. *Concerto No. 25 in C major, K. 503* was finished on December 4, 1786, but the first sketches seem to date from two years earlier, when Mozart apparently laid it aside to write another Concerto in C major (No. 21). When completed, it was an exact contemporary of the “Prague” Symphony, between *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, and the most powerfully symphonic of all Mozart’s concertos. In Mozart’s career it stands in the same position as Symphony No. 82 (“The Bear”) in that of Haydn: both are in C major and date from 1786.

The opening *Allegro maestoso*, one theme of which in fact resembles the future “Marseillaise”, proceeds by great tonal blocks (like the C major episodes of the first finale in *Don Giovanni*), and we recognize the constant presence of a four-note rhythmic pattern, drawn straight from Haydn’s “Bear”, serving sometimes to mark or emphasize a climax of intensity and sometimes to introduce new melodies (in particular, that foreshadowing the “Marseillaise”). The major/minor alternations keep occurring, and the end of the development culminates in extraordinary six-voice polyphony fully worthy of the finale of the “Jupiter” Symphony.

The very pure melody of the *Andante* in F major and the contredanse nature of the *Allegretto* finale are immediately attractive. Their forms are less complex than that of the first movement, but countless details, including diversions into the minor and the massive stature of the finale, show that they all belong to the same work.

Concerto No. 26 in D major, K. 537

1. *Allegro*
2. *Larghetto*
3. *Allegretto*

Dated February 24, 1788 *Concerto No. 26 in D major, K. 537* owes its nickname, “The Coronation”, to the fact that Mozart played it for the coronation of Emperor Leopold II in Frankfurt on October 15, 1790. With the 20th concerto but for entirely different reasons, this was the Mozart concerto most frequently played during the 19th century and the early part of the 20th, because here more than in any other concerto of Mozart’s maturity he gave great structural importance to the melodic factor. Generally speaking, the overall architecture results from a succession of melodies separated by transitional phrases that are not cadences resolving the tension but veritable suspensions of movement.

This is clear from the orchestral exposition of the opening *Allegro*, in which several measures are only there to keep us waiting for a beautiful theme to enter. But Mozart always succeeds in justifying such delays both in themselves and by what follows, especially since he makes up for them with brilliant virtuoso passages creating tension on their own.

In its almost naked simplicity the *Larghetto* in A major is already like *The Magic Flute* and the Clarinet Concerto, while it clearly evolved from the A major trio in the second act of *Don Giovanni* (the scene at Elvira’s window).

The *Allegretto* finale is a particularly successful synthesis of grace and vigor.

Concerto No. 27 in B flat major, K. 595

1. *Allegro*
2. *Larghetto*
3. *Rondo. Allegro*

While working on the 26th concerto, Mozart may have been partially guided by the wish to reconquer his public, but this was not necessary when he composed *Concerto No. 27 in B flat major*,

K. 595. The latter was completed on January 5, 1791 after two dreadful years and at the beginning of the extraordinarily fertile year in which he died. In this 27th Concerto we find some echoes of the few compositions of 1790, especially the slightly bitter, disillusioned tone of the K. 589 and K. 590 String Quartets, but also and above all of the unearthly serenity of the Clarinet Concerto and of certain passages of *The Magic Flute*, which were not finished until six or eight months later.

The *Allegro* avoids unnecessary virtuosity, shows of strength, or strokes of pathos, but its surface simplicity hides the most profound distress as well as the most incredible subtleties of language: constant oppositions between major and minor, abrupt modulations and dissonances bold in themselves but always tempered by slight delays or by the instrumentation.

The completely disembodied *Larghetto* in E flat starts by quoting one of the loveliest passages from Haydn's opera *La Fedeltà Premiata*.

The theme of the final *Allegro* in 6/8 was later used by Mozart for his song "Sehnsucht nach dem Frühling" (Longing for Spring). This joyful movement remains closer to chamber music than to the brilliant style all too often associated with concertos and with works for symphony orchestra.

Marc Vignal, 1991, Translation: Robert Cushman.

Concerto for three pianos No. 7 in F major, K. 242

1. *Allegro*

2. *Adagio*

3. *Rondeau. Tempo di Menuetto*

The *Concerto for three pianos No. 7 in F major, K. 242* originated in Salzburg in February 1776, before Mozart turned his attention to the pianoforte, and is commonly called the "Lodron" Concerto. It was written on commission for the countess Antonia Lodron and her two daughters Aloisia and Giuseppina; it is no wonder, then, that Mozart infused the work with the character of aristocratic salon music that makes no great demands either on the intellect or in terms of virtuosity.

Mozart nevertheless had a high regard for this piece; with great satisfaction, he reported to his father that he had succeeded in having the concerto performed in Augsburg on October 22, 1777. In this performance, Mozart himself played the second piano part, with the organist J. Demmler at the first piano and the piano builder Stein at the third. Mozart wrote of a further performance of the piece in Mannheim, on March 12, 1778; on June 27, 1781, he asked his father for a copy of the composition, which he had in the meantime also reworked into a concerto for two pianos.

Concerto for two pianos No. 10 in E flat major, K. 365

1. *Allegro*

2. *Andante*

3. *Rondeaux. Allegro*

The *Concerto for two pianos No. 10 in E flat major, K. 365* is the only one Mozart originally conceived for two pianos; it originated early in the year 1779, shortly after his return to Salzburg from his important trip to Mannheim and Paris. It was originally written for Mozart himself and his sister Nannerl; the first documented performances, however, refer to different soloists: Mozart and his pupil Josepha Auernhammer. The two of them performed the work in Vienna on November 23, 1781, at a private concert at the Auernhammer home, and also on May 26, 1782, as the first of the *Augarten Concerts* organized by Jacob Martin in collaboration with Mozart.

The work itself represents the successful solution of two problems: on the one hand, the two soloists must be integrated into the large orchestral forces; on the other hand, the demands of their individual parts must be adequately met and exactly balanced. And as usual, this conflict was solved by Mozart in a seemingly effortless manner; the result is a work in which a dialogue between equal partners, demonstrating great technical finesse, unfolds, with the mood heightening from “lively merriness to teasing humor”. (Abert)

Ulrich Tank, 1991, Translation: Deborah Hochgesang.