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A Matter of Taste:

Duos for Violin and Viola by Joseph Haydn, Michael Haydn,  
and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

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requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts

By

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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In 1883, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart composed two duos for violin and viola. It is said that Mozart's friend Michael Haydn had become ill, and was unable to complete a set of six duos for his boss, the Archbishop Colloredo. Mozart supposedly wrote his two duos to be passed off as Michael Haydn's work. That Mozart intended to write these two pieces in Michael Haydn's style is impossible, as there is a great difference in how the two composers treat the viola part. Mozart regards the two instruments as equals while Michael Haydn clearly writes a more soloistic violin line and a viola accompaniment. Michael's brother, Joseph Haydn, also favors the violin line in his duo sonatas for violin and viola. Mozart's treatment of the viola part was highly innovative for its time. Additionally, this dissertation researches the various problems in performance practice in regards to the two Mozart duos. These issues include tempo, dynamics, articulation,

phrasing, vibrato, and the selection of editions. While exploring these matters in depth, the performer will find that in combination with careful research of documents and treatises by the likes of Leopold Mozart, nearly every aspect of performing these duos comes down to a matter of personal taste. It is in putting one's taste into action that one can find an authentic interpretation of these works.

This dissertation of Alison Elaine Spieth is approved.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### I. THE ROLE OF THE VIOLA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Viola repertoire blossomed during the eighteenth century. And yet, viola music composed during the classical era is not often discussed or studied in great depth. This oversight is partially due to the limited amount of popular eighteenth century solo viola repertoire available. “Significant concertos and sonatas featuring the instrument were written by talented composers, whose reputations were overshadowed by the superior genius of Haydn and Mozart; consequently, their works fell into neglect and were forgotten during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>1</sup> The aforementioned works were written by the likes of Dittersdorf, Druschetsky, Hoffstetter, Hoffmeister, Vanhal, and Wranitzky.<sup>2</sup> Each of these composers was of note in their day, but none of their compositions have truly withstood the test of time. Another factor leading to the absence of brilliant eighteenth-century solo viola works may have been the lack of skilled viola players available during the classical era:

Before 1740 the viola was seldom treated as a soloist in any context, generally being banished to the decent obscurity of the accompaniment, realizing the harmony of the middle parts. At the low point of its fortunes the instrument was described by J.J. Quantz (*Versuch*, 1752): The viola is commonly regarded as of little importance in the musical establishment. The reason may well be that it is often played by persons who are either still beginners in the ensemble or have no particular gifts with which to distinguish themselves on the violin, or that the instrument yields all too few advantages to its players, so that able people are not easily persuaded to take it up.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Maurice W. Riley, *The History of the Viola*. (Ann Arbor: Braun-Brumfield, 1980), 128.

<sup>2</sup> Riley, *The History of the Viola*, 128.

<sup>3</sup> *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, s.v. “Viola” by David D. Boyden and Ann M. Woodward, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline/subscriber/article/grove/music/29438> (April 30, 2012).

And indeed, in the past 250 years or so, violists have still not managed to escape from this social stigma. Thankfully, viola repertoire has markedly improved since the days of Quantz. In the eighteenth century, this improvement came mostly in the form of chamber music compositions.

## II. THE EVOLVING ROLE OF THE VIOLA IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CHAMBER MUSIC

Though certainly not prolific in their solo writing for the viola, the musical geniuses of the eighteenth century did manage to contribute greatly to the production of rich viola writing in their chamber music compositions:

During the lifetime of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven a good many changes took place in the treatment of the viola in chamber music, especially in quartets and quintets and occasionally in string trios and duos... The changes came about partly because a basic concept of late 18th-century chamber music was that a single player played each part... In this context a viola player of any attainment would become increasingly impatient simply playing the harmonic filler 'parts of the middle' while the first violin was playing the main melodies... Composers of early quartets, like Haydn, saw that the inner parts of string quartets would have to be made more interesting by giving them thematic motifs or even, from time to time, main melodies, obbligato parts or virtuoso figuration... This factor in turn animated the solo player to greater mastery of the technique of his instrument.<sup>4</sup>

Joseph Haydn may have single handedly jump-started the composition of decent parts for viola by its mere inclusion in the string quartet genre, a genre said to have more or less been invented by Haydn. "In a celebrated comment Goethe once said that 'a good quartet was like listening to a stimulating conversation between four intelligent people.'"<sup>5</sup> This statement encapsulates great string quartet writing in a nutshell. And of course, such a

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<sup>4</sup> *Grove Music Online*. "Viola".

<sup>5</sup> David Wyn Jones and Otto Biba, ed., "Oxford Composer Companions Haydn". (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 293.

conversation does not work if only one person in the group is allowed to have an opinion. In early string quartets by Haydn, he had not yet mastered this kind of conversation between all four instruments. In fact, Haydn had merely stumbled upon the string quartet genre to begin with:

The baron [Carl Joseph Furnburg], who had engaged Haydn to teach music to his children, is said to have asked him to supply music for private performances there. Responding to his request, he furnished a composition for four available string players; Furnberg's pastor, his steward, Haydn, and a cellist identified as a brother of the composer and theorist Albrechtsberger.<sup>6</sup>

In the following excerpt from his string quartet in F Major Op. 17 No. 2, one can see that Haydn is still in the beginning stages of mastering the genre:



Example 1:  
String Quartet in F Major Op. 17 No. 2

The role of the viola here is a bit simplistic, and rather than moving as an independent line, the viola line is quite similar to that of second violin. This type of writing is typical in Haydn's early quartets. However, in Haydn's later compositions for the genre, he becomes more inventive. In Op. 54, No. 1, for example, one can see that the viola is allowed numerous interjections of its own, and the technical demands of the part have

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<sup>6</sup> Floyd Grave and Margaret Grave, *The String Quartets of Joseph Haydn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 9-10.

subtly increased. In the following example, one can see a more conversational interaction between the four voices with the passing of the sixteenth notes:



Example 2:  
String Quartet in G Major Op. 54 No. 1

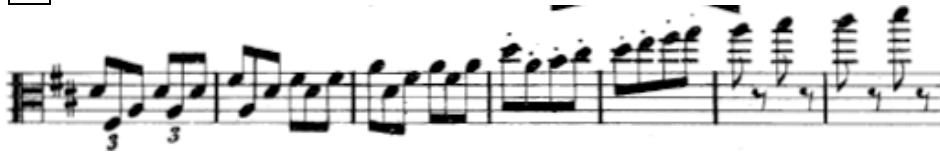
With the arrival of more involved music being composed for the viola, violists were forced to become more and more proficient and specialized on their instrument. With this newfound proficiency, composers were able to write more complex viola parts in their chamber works. In the late eighteenth century, one would be hard pressed to find a composer with more inventive viola writing than that of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

### III. MOZART AND THE VIOLA

Mozart was one of the earliest pioneers in quality composition for the viola. Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* for violin, viola, and orchestra in E-flat Major is the only

truly exceptional classical-era work to showcase a solo viola part with orchestra, and one might argue the best piece of solo viola writing of all time. The level of difficulty of the viola part is also quite extraordinary for the year 1779. “He made technical demands of the viola quite unprecedented at that time, requiring the player to reach the 7th position at the end of the last movement”<sup>7</sup>:

444



Example 3:  
*Sinfonia Concertante*, third movement.

One must remember that in the *Sinfonia Concertante*, the viola is forced to share the spotlight with solo violin. Still, “the fact that Mozart wrote no solo work for the viola is immaterial; what is significant is that he handled it with a daring and originality which in his day must have seemed revolutionary.”<sup>8</sup> Why was it that Mozart in particular was able to write such delightful parts for viola? This may have had something to do with his fondness for playing the instrument himself. Mozart was known to play the viola in addition to the violin, and quite often played the viola part in string quartets with his friends<sup>9</sup>.

In the following text, violist and composer Rebecca Clarke eloquently describes how viola repertoire may be improved by a composer’s attraction to their own instrument:

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<sup>7</sup> *Grove Music Online*, “Viola.”

<sup>8</sup> J. Arthur Watson, “Mozart and the Viola,” *Music & Letters*, 22, no. 1 (January 1941): 41, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/727826>.

<sup>9</sup> Riley, *The History of the Viola*, 130.

One of the chief factors in [the viola's] advancement has been the personal interest taken in it by the composers themselves; for, often anxious to take part in concerted music, yet not wanting to spend much time acquiring the technique of a too exacting instrument, many of them very naturally took up the viola... It can easily be understood how the affection felt by the composer for his own instrument was reflected in its growing importance in chamber music, and Mozart in particular was the one who first realized that it might have something of its own to say... One can imagine Mozart, indulgently fond of his own instrument, thinking, "We really must give a nice part to the poor old viola now and then," and straight-way proceeding to write in his quartets- and still more so in his string quintets- passages such as it had never before been confronted with. Whereupon the poor old viola player of the day, startled, had to emerge from his comfortable obscurity, and begin to practice, thus helping lay the foundation on which the viola has risen to its present position.<sup>10</sup>

Mozart's high caliber of technical prowess on the viola combined with his compositional ingenuity made him the perfect candidate to come up with beautiful and challenging parts for the instrument. In *Sinfonia Concertante*, Mozart treats the violin and the viola parts as equals. They often go back and forth sharing the spotlight in a virtuosic battle of wills. Mozart himself may even have played viola in the premiere of this work. "It was probably Mozart and his father, who played the work for the first time, and the idea of heightening the edge of the viola sound by tuning the instrument up one-half step in pitch... is a device pointing to Wolfgang as the violist."<sup>11</sup>

Though Haydn bestowed upon the viola a new role of importance in the string world by its mere inclusion in the quartet genre, it was Mozart who took the viola to the next level in his chamber works. Mozart possessed an uncanny knack for utilizing the strengths of the viola as harmonic filler while still incorporating a component of virtuosity.

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<sup>10</sup> Rebecca Clarke, "The History of the Viola in Quartet Writing", *Music and Letters*, 4, no. 11 (Jan., 1923): 6-7, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/726173>.

<sup>11</sup> Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *The violin concerti: a facsimile edition of the autographs*, Ed. Gabriel Banat (New York: Raven Press, 1986), 17.

#### IV. AN INTRODUCTION TO MOZART'S DUOS K. 423 AND K. 424

Mozart's inventive writing for the viola is of special note in the duos K. 423 and K. 424 for violin and viola. In the first place, string duos are quite a wonderful genre. Duos are not the glamorous attention-getting showstoppers of the string repertoire. This description would be more fitting of the string quartet genre. But, perhaps one should give the violin and viola duo genre a bit more attention. Apart from Mozart's abundant talents as a composer, he practically changed this genre from "violin and accompaniment" to "duo for violin and viola" in one fell swoop. As he does with the *Sinfonia Concertante*, Mozart writes equal roles for the violin and viola. In the *Sinfonia Concertante*, Mozart has the benefit of an entire orchestra to provide the accompaniment. The marvelous thing about these duos is that both the solo and the accompaniment are able to exist, but rather than playing one role or the other, the violin and viola seamlessly switch between the two roles. And, in these duos, Mozart sometimes comes close to creating the texture of a full quartet with only two instruments. Musicologist Alfred Einstein puts it best when he writes, "but the fact that [the Mozart duos] call for fewer instruments is no indication of the value of these works. They are on a plane with the quartets, even though they are not nearly so well known."<sup>12</sup>

In relation to the duo genre, three composers will be discussed. The first will be Franz Joseph Haydn. He wrote six duos for the pairing of violin and viola early on in his compositional career. His younger brother, Michael Haydn, tackled the genre himself a decade later with the composition of four duos for this team of instruments. Finally, the

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<sup>12</sup> Einstein, *Mozart*, 185.

two duos by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who was a good friend and colleague of both Joseph and Michael Haydn, will be discussed at length.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE VIOLIN AND VIOLA DUOS OF JOSEPH HAYDN

### I. THE ROLE OF THE VIOLA IN JOSEPH HAYDN'S DUOS

Joseph Haydn wrote six duos for violin and viola ca. 1770. These works were aptly billed as “6 violin solos with viola accompaniment...Haydn’s description of the viola part as an ‘accompaniment’ is an accurate one; the instrument provides unfailingly pointed and rhythmic support but it never enters into thematic dialogue with the violin.”<sup>13</sup> But in this case, why did Haydn specify that the accompaniment be played by viola? Why not merely write an accompaniment for “basso”? “Haydn’s simple viola part meant that it could easily be played an octave lower by a cello, and the duets circulated in that scoring, as well as in a version for two violins. Neither of these alternative versions was sanctioned by the composer.”<sup>14</sup> One can only presume that Haydn particularly enjoyed this combination of instruments, and having played on the viola himself on occasion, possessed an appreciation for the tone the viola could bring to the mix. The viola is an excellent counterpart to the violin. Unlike a violin duo, it provides a distinctly different tone and timbre. Unlike the cello, it is close enough to the range of the violin so as not to create a wide discrepancy. But, if Haydn wrote this party specifically with a viola in mind, why is the viola part so simple?

These duo sonatas were composed after the composition of his very early string quartets, but just before his more lauded quartets, Op.20 and Op.33. One can only imagine that Haydn might have been a bit more imaginative with the viola part had he

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<sup>13</sup> Jones, *Oxford Composer*, 73.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

already had the experience of writing these more complex quartets. Additionally, Haydn likely was thinking of a particular violinist when composing these duos. “The duets seem to have been written with the capabilities of Luigi Tomasini in mind.”<sup>15</sup> Tomasini was a talented violinist employed by the Esterhazy court. If Haydn already had a fabulous muse to write for, why not give him a fully-fledged solo part with which to show off his talents? And, rather than innovating a new genre with these duos, Haydn is looking more to the past for inspiration. “The sonatas belong to the species of ‘accompanied solo’ that emerged from the baroque sonata for solo instrument and basso continuo.”<sup>16</sup>

## II. JOSEPH HAYDN’S SONATA FOR VIOLIN AND VIOLA IN D MAJOR, HOB. VI: 4.

The form of these six duos is quite straight forward, and each piece is in three movements:

The opening movements are mainly in quadruple meter at a moderate tempo (Allegro moderato, Andante, or Moderato... Four of the middle movements are in the minor mode, and all are marked “Adagio” for the most part with a time signature of  $\frac{3}{4}$  or  $\frac{6}{8}$ . All the finale movements are varied minuets, a species that Haydn otherwise rarely used, at least not to this extent.<sup>17</sup>

In these sonatas, while the violin is usually playing the role of accompanist, the viola is occasionally given a few interesting tidbits. For example, in Haydn’s duo HobVI: 4 in D Major, the theme begins in the violin with a pedantic eighth-note accompaniment in the viola. The balance of the two roles remains the same for the entire exposition. Finally in the development, Haydn lends some interest to the viola line. In m.23, the viola is given a

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<sup>15</sup> Jones, *Oxford Composer*, 72.

<sup>16</sup> Haydn, *Sechs Sonaten*, VI.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

brief glimmer of the theme. The violin enters in m.22 with the theme in A Major, and the viola is given the theme in a brief canon a fourth above:



Example 4:  
Sonata for Violin and Viola, Hob. VI: 4, first movement.

In m.38, the viola is given the opportunity of starting the canon with the violin entering a fifth above the viola, and the viola maintains equal footing with the violin for approximately three measures before reverting back to its plodding eighth-note accompaniment.

In the second movement, the subservient role the viola takes can be forgiven, as the violist is given a beautiful countermelody. The movement is in D Minor, and the viola begins with a dark minor third interval. Meanwhile, the violin plays a mysterious and searching theme, creating an unsettling tension by holding a D over the bar line whilst the viola keeps things moving along with quarter notes:



Example 5:  
Sonata for Violin and Viola Hob. VI: 4, second movement.

The viola plays a snippet of the theme in m.36, but this is soon overshadowed by the return of the countermelody in the violin. Here, the countermelody has become the melody, as the performers soon break into another short canon, this time at the octave.

In the humorous third movement, the viola remains in the background while the violin cycles through a series of variations. The only thing that stands out in the viola is the rather comical descending octave in the accompaniment that occurs at the end of each four bar violin phrase. Haydn, always the jokester, lets the viola have the last laugh with the charming final cadence:

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Example 6:  
Sonata for Violin and Viola Hob. VI, 4, third movement.

Overall, Joseph Haydn's duos manage to be charming, playful, and quite touching. His writing for the violin line is imaginative and virtuosic. The issue at hand is merely that Haydn does not use much imagination in his composition of the viola line. After all, these pieces were composed with the intent of featuring the violin in the role of soloist, and perhaps the world of violists at the time would not have been technically ready to enter the spotlight quite yet. One must also keep in mind that these pieces were composed early in his career, and Haydn had yet to write his greatest string masterpieces. One can only imagine that had he written these pieces a bit later in life, the viola would have been given a few more chances to shine.

## CHAPTER THREE: THE VIOLIN AND VIOLA DUOS OF MICHAEL HAYDN

### I. MICHAEL HAYDN: A COMPOSER OF SACRED MUSIC

Michael Haydn, Franz Joseph Haydn's younger brother, is mostly known for his church music. "Haydn's sacred vocal music was viewed by most early 19<sup>th</sup>-century writers on the subject as superior to his instrumental and dramatic works. In a catalog of his works (1814), his friend Rettensteiner described Haydn as 'the great, unique, inimitable master in the church style'...E.T.A. Hoffmann even considered his church music superior to that of his brother Joseph."<sup>18</sup> Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and his father Leopold were also quite impressed with Michael's sacred works. "It was as composer of church music, as a contrapuntist, that Michael Haydn was especially esteemed by father and son; and in Wolfgang's report to Padre Martini about musical conditions in Salzburg, he praises Haydn and Adlgasser as 'due bravissimi contrapuntisti.'"<sup>19</sup> Michael Haydn was not as successful or as prolific in other genres. "During the 1780s, Haydn completed 20 symphonies, some of which achieved a modest circulation outside Salzburg...In the field of chamber music, he composed five divertimentos for mixed ensembles between 1785 and 1790, but he did not pursue the string quartet as an elevated genre."<sup>20</sup> Despite not following in the footsteps of his brother by composing great works for string quartet, Michael did compose a set of pieces for violin and viola.

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<sup>18</sup> *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, "Michael Haydn" by Dwight Blazin, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/52558> (accessed January 19, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Alfred Einstein, *Mozart*, trans. Arthur Mendel and Nathan Broder (London: Cassel & Company Ltd, 1966), 126.

<sup>20</sup> *Grove Music Online*, "Michael Haydn."

## II. THE COMMISSIONING OF THE DUOS AND MOZART'S COMPLETION OF THE SET

This set of violin and viola duos was composed at the bequest of Michael's employer, the Archbishop Colloredo. When Michael was unable to complete his commission, it is said that his friend Mozart stepped in to complete the set. And thus, the violin and viola duos of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart were brought into existence. An account of the situation was originally given as follows by two of Michael's students:

In the summer of 1783 Mozart was visiting in Salzburg when Michael Haydn was prevented by illness from completing a series of six duos apparently ordered by Colloredo- only four had been finished. The invalid gave his condition as an excuse, but the Archbishop, who did not like excuses, immediately ordered Haydn's salary to be withheld, as the surest means of hastening the convalescence of a man who had only his salary with which to pay the doctor and chemist. Mozart who visited the sick man every day, found him much disturbed and, upon inquiring, was told of the Archbishop's decree. He was not in the habit of taking refuge in consoling words when there was anything he could do to help. Without saying a word to his poor friend, he went home and two days later brought him the Duets fully written out in a fair copy. Nothing more was needed, except the name of Michael Haydn on the first page, for them to be delivered to the Archbishop.<sup>21</sup>

Of course, Mozart's storied relationship with the Archbishop Colloredo makes this bit of gossip all the more intriguing. The Archbishop Colloredo came into power in 1772, and he did not make himself popular among the court musicians:

Colloredo sought to modernize the archdiocese on the Viennese model, but his reform, while generally favouring cultural life in the city by attracting numerous prominent writers and scientists, met with local resistance. The court music in particular suffered, and many traditional opportunities for music-making were eliminate."<sup>22</sup>

Both Mozart and his father Leopold had a relationship with Colloredo that can be described as tumultuous. Both father and son wanted to compose and work as they

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<sup>21</sup> Einstein, *Mozart*, 185-186.

<sup>22</sup> *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Mozart" by Cliff Eisen et al., <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40258pg3> (accessed May 1, 2012).

pleased. Both enjoyed writing instrumental music. The Archbishop, however, had other preferences:

It is likely that Mozart's cultivation of instrumental music, which in many cases he wrote for private patrons rather than the court, was encouraged by Leopold, who during his heyday had been the most prominent and successful local composer of symphonies and serenades. Yet this may also have been a miscalculation. Leopold apparently failed to recognize that the conditions of musical life in the archdiocese, to say nothing of musical taste, had changed since the 1750s. Matters came to a head in the summer of 1777. In August [Wolfgang Amadeus] Mozart wrote a petition asking the archbishop for his release from employment, and Colloredo responded by dismissing both father and son.<sup>23</sup>

In 1779, Mozart returned to employment in Salzburg, but left shortly thereafter. It is clear that Mozart did not possess a talent for following orders, and likely accepted these kinds of positions in order to earn a living.

Eventually, none other than Michael Haydn came to Salzburg to work for the archbishop:

In an ambiguously worded document appointing Michael Haydn court and cathedral organist in 1782 [Colloredo] wrote: 'we accordingly appoint [J.M. Haydn] as our court and cathedral organist, in the same fashion as young Mozart was obligated, with the additional stipulation that he show more diligence...and compose more often for our cathedral and chamber music'. The cause of Colloredo's dissatisfaction may have lain in Mozart's other works of the time... [such as] the Sinfonia concertante for violin and viola k364... Few of these works would have been heard at court, where instrumental music was little favoured.<sup>24</sup>

The relationship between Michael Haydn and Archbishop Colloredo proved successful. Michael Haydn was much more willing to adapt to the Archbishop's demands. "Haydn apparently thrived during the early years of Colloredo's rule... Colloredo published a pastoral letter, the first of a series of proclamations intended to simplify church services. In response, Haydn composed about 100 settings of Mass Propers in a simple

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

homophonic style between late 1783 and 1791.”<sup>25</sup> While Mozart’s work is heralded as superior to that of Michael Haydn today, Haydn certainly better knew how to work the system to his advantage. By writing copious amounts of sacred music, Haydn was able to stay on good terms with the Archbishop and maintain a high standing at court. “He served as court composer and played the viola in the orchestra.”<sup>26</sup>

The story of Mozart completing Michael Haydn’s duos has some flaws. For example, it is curious that the Archbishop Colloredo would have been hell-bent on having these duos completed on such a strict schedule. “The part of ‘ogre’ that is again imputed to Colloredo is probably invented: it is difficult to see why six duos would have to be finished by a certain day.”<sup>27</sup> History tells us he was more concerned with the output of church music. These duos were probably requested because of the Colloredo’s fondness for his own instrument, the violin. Perhaps it is even conceivable that Colloredo could have played the violin part and Michael Haydn the viola part. Why would there be a serious deadline for such pleasure pieces? Colloredo was well accustomed to Mozart’s slow output of music so it seems to follow that he would have cut Michael Haydn a bit of slack in completing the final two of six duos. But then, what other reason would Mozart have for finishing off the set? “Probably he had been simply struck by a desire to try his hand at this form, too.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. “Haydn, Michael” by Dwight Blazin, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/52558> (accessed May 1, 2012).

<sup>26</sup> Mozart, *The violin concerti*, 12.

<sup>27</sup> Einstein, *Mozart*, 186.

<sup>28</sup> Einstein, *Mozart*, 186.

### III. MICHAEL HAYDN'S DUO FOR VIOLIN AND VIOLA IN E MAJOR, P. 129

Written in 1783, the form of Michael Haydn's duos is strikingly similar to that of his elder brother's duos of ca.1770. They are each in three movements, and each duo begins with a fast movement, contains a slow movement in the middle (in this case, they are all marked "Adagio"), and ends with some form of upbeat variation movement or rondo. In Michael Haydn's duos, the viola stays predominantly in the background and lacks a plethora of thematic material. But, somehow the viola seems more included than in the duos of Joseph Haydn. In Joseph's duos, while the viola does occasionally get thematic material, it is generally only mimicking the violin in canon. The violist doesn't seem to be able to have his or her own thoughts and ideas. Additionally, Joseph's viola lines don't have a great deal of harmonic variety or direction. Michael's duos seem to incorporate a more active accompaniment. The violist, rather than remaining in the background, seems to respond to what the violinist is doing and converse with him accordingly. There is more of a dialogue going on between the two instruments. This effect is achieved by having the viola line move whenever the violin part is stagnant.

In m.1, the violin plays the theme, and the viola rests in beats 2-3 before deciding how to react. This reaction comes forth in the form of buoyant eighth notes. In m.2, the violist responds to the lyrical sixteenth notes in the violin by joining in at the cadence, then continuing with its own sixteenth-note retort leading into m.3:



Example 7:  
Duo for Violin and Viola E Major P. 129, first movement.

A similar interjection can be found in the viola part leading into m.5. Even though the viola is not able to delight in thematic splendor, it does involve itself in a conversational repartee with the violin.

The second movement, marked “Adagio”, begins in A Major. The violin maintains its omnipotence, and the viola plays the harmony in eighth notes throughout the entire first section. The middle section of the movement moves to the relative minor key. The added interest for the viola accompaniment finally occurs in mm.42-57, when the viola is given plentiful sixteenth notes:

Example 8:  
 Duo for Violin and Viola in E Major, P. 129, second movement.

To make matters even more exciting, this change of pace comes with a change of dynamic to *forte*, and even a few *sforzandi*.

It is in the set of rustic variations of Michael Haydn’s E-Major duo that the viola is given a chance to shine, however briefly. For most of the movement, the viola is relegated to pure accompaniment:

Example 9:  
 Duo for Violin and Viola in E Major P. 120, second movement.

It is not until violin and viola have played through three full variations complete with repeats that the viola finally breaks free of its repetitive accompaniment in m.65.

Variation four heralds in the theme (an octave lower) in the viola:

Example 10:  
Duo for Violin and Viola in E Major P. 120, second movement.

It is quite pleasing that Michael Haydn uses a bit of imagination and allows both instruments to shine concurrently, rather than having the viola stuck with the accompaniment all of the time. One wishes he would do this kind of thing in a few more places, rather than just for one variation in one movement. Haydn could have used this double-themed variation as a launching pad to spiral out of control to a spectacular and forceful finish. But alas, the viola is soon relegated to the background once more.

Michael Haydn certainly could have involved the viola a bit more in his four duos. By this time, the viola has been making its way up in the string world. Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* was composed in 1779, four years prior to the composition of

Michael Haydn's duos. Joseph Haydn texturally rich Op.33 string quartets had been written two years earlier. Especially irksome is the fact that Michael Haydn himself had written a concerto for Organ, Viola, and Orchestra back in ca.1761.<sup>29</sup> Why then would Michael Haydn write a somewhat lackluster viola part? Perhaps Michael was too focused on pleasing Archbishop Colloredo with a whimsical violin part to play? Or, perhaps Michael simply lacked the compositional aptitude to write two parts with equal importance while maintaining a good melodic flow and a rich accompaniment. After all, Michael hadn't much experience writing instrumental chamber music as compared with Joseph Haydn and Mozart. Writing a duo where both parts sparkle in the limelight takes a special kind of finesse and contrapuntal skill. Rather than thinking in terms of solo and accompaniment, a composer must think of a whole picture. The two instruments must constantly speak to each other in an interactive dialogue of melodic and harmonic material. Michael Haydn demonstrates a hint of this idea in the fourth variation of the finale of his E-Major duo, but it is not brought into full fruition.

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<sup>29</sup> *Grove Music Online*, "Haydn, Michael".

## CHAPTER FOUR: A MUSICAL EXPLORATION OF MOZART'S DUO K. 423

### I. LINKS BETWEEN MOZART, JOSEPH HAYDN, AND MICHAEL HAYDN

Upon composing the duos K.423 and K.424, Mozart had already amassed a considerable amount of experience writing instrumental music. Mozart's mastery of chamber music writing certainly shines through in these two works. These duos simply could not have been written by Michael Haydn, which makes the fact that they could have been brought forward as Michael Haydn's work all the more bewildering:

Mozart composed the two remaining pieces, and the 'collection' was passed off to the Archbishop under Haydn's name. To the present day, researchers have been unable to discover a contemporary print containing all six of the duos. One reason for this may be that Mozart's duos clearly stand apart in the equality of the two parts and the ingenious handling of their themes.<sup>30</sup>

It is fascinating to have two compositions composed at the same time for the same instrumentation, both written by two prestigious composers, both of whom have links to the court of Archbishop Colloredo, and both of whom have important links to Joseph Haydn:

That [Mozart] probably knew Joseph's duos is indicated by the following parallels... Like Haydn, Mozart concludes the second of his duos with a set of variations; like him, he keeps the slow movements short, offering opportunities for a cadenza. These instrumental duos are a curious form that goes back deep into the sixteenth century: curious in their mixture of virtuosity, a didactic, etude-like air, and occasional strict, 'learned' movements. Mozart conserved all this, the virtuosity, the instructiveness, the 'strictness'... and yet created art-works of the finest sort, of a freshness, a humor, and an appropriateness for the instruments that make these works unique of their kind.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Streichduos fur Violine und Viola*, ed. Anja Bensiack (New York: G. Henle, 1997), iii.

<sup>31</sup> Einstein, *Mozart*, 186-187.

The opportunity to compare each composer's work side by side and look at the differences and similarities is simply irresistible. To speak of more of the differences, Mozart's pieces stand apart in many ways aside from equality of the writing between the two instruments:

Mozart's two supplements are masterpieces of bold harmony, contrapuntal ingenuity and rhythmical variety, all enriched by double-stopping which sometimes creates the illusion of more players than just two. The influence of the experience gained in composing K.387 is quite clear."<sup>32</sup>

The string quartet K. 387 in G Major, interestingly enough, was the first in the set of six composed by Mozart dedicated to Joseph Haydn. In this quartet, Mozart successfully shows off his skills within this trendy genre. The first movement of the quartet even contains a partially unaccompanied viola solo in the development, on par with the solos given to the violin, in an important turning point which heralds in an electrifying expansion of the theme with tense and exciting syncopation in the accompaniment:

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<sup>32</sup> H. C. Robbins Landon, *The Mozart Compendium* (Cambridge: Schirmer Books, 1990), 296.

64

72

Example 11:  
String Quartet K. 387 in G Major, first movement.

In his duos, Mozart puts the compositional skills gained from his experience writing quartets to good use. The opening of the G-Major duo utilizes the same conversational techniques employed in this quartet, but with only two instruments.

## II. FIRST MOVEMENT: *ALLEGRO*

There is a constant forward motion passed from instrument to instrument in the opening of the first movement of Mozart's duo K. 423. In m.1, the violin begins with an enchanting descending scale leading to chirping grace notes. While the violin tweets away on C, the motion is passed to the viola when it enters in m.2 with a D-Major scale of sixteenth notes. As soon as the viola takes a moment to rest, the violin enters with a teasing descending sequence of sixteenth notes. Just as the violin takes another moment to breathe, the viola comes in sneakily to take the focus away in m.5 with a new dynamic

(*piano*) and a few coy eighth notes. Meanwhile, the violin innocently enters with more thematic material. In m.5 the viola, perhaps all at once distrusting and accepting of this new melodic line, begins mimicking the violin in a cheeky game of cat and mouse:



Example 12:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, first movement.

In m.13, a temporary truce between the violin and viola is achieved in a soothing *piano* dynamic. The violin takes the melody, and the viola contents itself with a moving accompaniment of eighth notes, analogous to that found in the duos of Michael Haydn. In m.16, the viola becomes impatient. No longer content with the background, the viola chirps in with repeating minor-second sixteenth notes in m.16. The violin, frustrated with the viola's insubordination, bursts into a *forte* descending scale beginning on an A, only to be trumped by the viola in m.18, beginning on a B. This results in a four-bar canonic repartee. Finally the violin decides enough is enough and launches into a series of scales and arpeggios in m.24 while the viola sits back and laughs at its hard-working counterpart. Solace is found in the entrance of the second theme in D Major in m.27, marked *dolce*, as the violin and viola each patiently take their turn with the theme:

26



31



Example 13:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, first movement.

The violin and viola spar back and forth for a short while longer, with quick changes between *piano* and *forte*.

The development begins in D Major. Everything remains amicable between the two instruments as they develop the second theme. In m.58, Mozart picks up the excitement a bit by having the violin launch into D Minor. The viola soon follows suit and begins to mimic the violin. In m.60 the game is cleverly reversed as viola enters with an E-Major arpeggio and is copied by the violin. As the instruments find their way through many arpeggios in many keys, the leader and follower constantly change roles:

62



Example 14:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, first movement.

The viola finally wins the leading role in mm.65-74, as the violin is forced to follow the whims of the viola. The violin takes over in m.75 with sixteenth notes as the two instruments attempt to find their way back from D Major to G Major. The triumphant recapitulation arrives in m.82.

The second theme returns in G major in m.112. A delightfully serpentine passage of eighth notes ensues as the instruments pass descending sevenths to each other. A *subito forte* passage follows and one can tell that the instruments have not yet given up on their duel. Two bars of sixteenth notes are traded from violin to viola. After this, the energy is increased as the violin and viola trade sixteenths every half bar, constantly overlapping and interrupting each other in turn.

An extraordinary moment of suspense occurs in m.132. As violin and viola finish their final brawl, they arrive at a deceptive cadence on C Major. The violin floats above the atmosphere on a high E, and a full beat of rest follows. This moment of rest is incredibly charming. When one listens to these measures transpire, it seems as though the violin could remain up in the air forever. Mozart does not frivolously use rests in this piece. The only other rest of this length of the movement was after the cadence in the exposition, which was to be expected. This rest adds that extra bit of magic that Mozart is capable of:

129



Example 15:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, first movement.

The instruments finally do come down from the clouds after what might seem like an eternity. The violin plays a G, and onward they go to the final cadence in m.142. It does not seem that the wrestling match between the two players is entirely resolved here. Instead, it seems that they simply agree to disagree. The violist tries to keep up, but the stubborn violin squeezes as many acrobatic sixteenth notes as it can into the last two bars, as the viola attempts to compensate with a couple of well placed triple stops:

138



Example 16:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, third movement.

## II. SECOND MOVEMENT: *ADAGIO*

As with the duos by Joseph Haydn and Michael Haydn, Mozart's duos are each in three movements. The first is always a fast tempo, the second a slow tempo, and the third an upbeat rondo or set of variations. In the second movement of Mozart's duo in G Major, he perhaps gives a nod to Michael Haydn by choosing an *Adagio* tempo. Over the scope of his work, Mozart seems to have been more partial to marking his slow movements "Andante". Despite Mozart's divergence from his usual preference for *Andante* tempos, this slow movement is one of Mozart's most beautiful.

The *Adagio* is in C Major. The first note of the theme spans nearly four beats as the violin holds a G. In such a slow tempo, the first few beats could seem like an eternity. Mozart maintains motion in the viola line while the violin takes its time enjoying just one beautiful note, complete with a blooming *crescendo* and *subito piano*. In mm.4-5, the

violin struggles its way back up to find the G again. Never one for monotony, Mozart gives the viola a sixteenth note accompaniment in m.5. A lesser composer may have simply continued using eighth notes:



Example 17:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, second movement.

The violin line becomes continuously more complex and ornamented, with beautiful triplets in m.6, and thirty-second notes in m.7. The viola begins a light oom-pah accompaniment in m.8, along with a chromatic melody in the violin:



Example 18:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, second movement.

Both instruments seem to get stuck from moving forward by a *sforzando* in m.11.

What happens next is something that surely could not have occurred in the duos by Joseph or Michael Haydn. The viola is given the theme, this time in G Major in m.12. Mozart also shakes up the accompaniment a bit in the violin line. The first measure of accompaniment in m.12 is identical to that in the viola line in m.1, though in a new key. But, in the second measure of the accompaniment, Mozart makes an adjustment. The violin begins on a low G, but then cannot descend past its lowest note. Instead, Mozart has the violin alternate between a higher G, F#, and G. Mozart likely makes this change

because had he taken the part up an octave, the violin would have been in competition with the viola melody. Mozart wisely decides to put the two parts in different ranges, thus giving the viola the room it needs to shine:

10

15

18

Example 19:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, second movement.

Mozart is a master of interesting accompaniments that are full of forward motion. This helps add to the rich texture of this duo. Many of the viola passages, such as in m.35 when the viola is given triplets, could easily be more monotonous. In m.36, the violin responds to rising octaves in the violin with triplets, allowing the compound rhythm to remain as triplets for a full two bars:



**RONDEAU.**  
Allegro.

8

Example 21:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, third movement.

Mozart could have had the viola enter at the same dynamic as before, but instead he changes the dynamic to *forte*. This adds to the competitive character of the piece, and the continuous shift in dynamics during this movement certainly keeps both the performer and the listener alert. Another such shift to *piano* occurs in m.16. The shifts in dynamic become more and more frequent as the piece slowly works its way into D Major.

The “B” section is heralded in by the viola’s double-stop horn call in m.34. These double stops add richly to the texture of the section. A single note would have sufficed, but Mozart is not content with using the bare minimum, and he instead gives the impression of two horn players calling out for a hunt rather than just one:

34

Example 22:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, third movement.

The violin answers the call with triplets that could even suggest horses galloping in from the distance. The intensity of the situation at hand intensifies when the dynamic is

increased to *forte* in m.38. Perhaps the hunters are nearing their prey as the violin excitedly repeats a high A. The viola halts its role of imitating horns and joins in on the sport in m.40. A series of fleeting triplets ensue and an interjection by the violin begins calming matters down leading into m.46.

The “A” section returns in m.58, but this time it is abbreviated, and after just eighteen bars the “C” section arrives in m.76. A delightful canon commences in the relative minor and lasts for approximately thirteen bars:



Example 23:  
Duo for Violin and Viola, K. 423, third movement.

The temperament of this section is sedate compared to the previous sections. The viola gets a bit tired of copying the violin and an outburst occurs in mm.89-91. Mozart experiments with the parallel minor key in m.92, cycles through a few tonalities, and ends up back in G Minor, finally returning to G Major by way of some well-placed chromaticism in m.124:



Example 24:  
Duo for Violin and Viola, K. 423, third movement.

This is another spot in which a lesser composer may have transitioned back to the “A” section with a bit less imagination, perhaps just holding a D-Major chord. Mozart’s slinky ascending *piano* chromatic scales lead perfectly into the return of the opening theme. These chromatic lines in the violin and viola are known as *passus duriusculus*, and span the distance of a fourth. In this instance, it is particularly crafty that Mozart writes this chromatic fourth simultaneously in both parts, but in thirds. The viola line leads to the tonic while the violin line leads to the third (the first note of the returning theme).

After a bit more dueling between violin and viola, the “B” section horn theme returns, this time in G Major in m.159. The return of the final “A” section is brought about with a playful descending G-Major scale, but this time the viola does not get a shot at the theme. Instead, the violin begins a virtuosic set of descending scalar triplets that last for two bars. The viola is a bit annoyed to have been denied its say, so it responds with three bars of raucous triplets. The instruments then sigh together in mm.195-196. They are growing tired of this constant struggle. In the end, they both get equal say with the final two *forte* chords, and the two instruments call it a day:

179

The image shows a musical score for a duo for violin and viola, K. 423, third movement. The score is written in G major and 3/4 time. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system has a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system continues the melodic and accompaniment lines. The third system concludes the passage with a final cadence. Dynamics include 'cresc.', 'f', and 'p'.

Example 25:  
Duo for Violin and Viola, K. 423, third movement.

## CHAPTER FIVE: A MUSICAL EXPLORATION OF MOZART'S DUO K. 424

### I. MOZART: A FIDDLER

When contemplating the musical value of these two duos, it is interesting to consider the role that playing both violin and viola held in Mozart's everyday life. From letters written between Leopold and Wolfgang Mozart, one can see that Mozart didn't relish being viewed as a "court violinist". In September of 1778, Leopold writes to his son:

As connoisseur you will not consider it beneath you to play the violin in the first symphony any more than does the Archbishop himself and also the courtiers who play with us. You would surely not deny Michael Haydn his achievements in music? Is he, a *Konzertmeister*, considered a court violist because he plays the viola in the chamber music concerts?... and I wager, that rather than let your own compositions be bungled, you will take part in the performance. It does not follow, however, that you will be regarded as a mere fiddler.<sup>33</sup>

Mozart did not want to be regarded as a "mere fiddler" because it did not come with the same cachet as reading figured bass or conducting from the harpsichord. There would likely have been more people capable of amateur violin playing, whereas reading figured bass was more of an art form reserved for learned musicians:

Members of the eighteenth century nobility cultivated the violin as a means of participating in the musical life of the court. Perhaps this instrument seemed easier for an amateur to learn than the keyboard, which demanded a knowledge of the figured bass, and shortcomings in performances on the violin could be covered by the professional "help" playing along.<sup>34</sup>

In his letter, Leopold had even referenced Michael Haydn's work ethic as a composer and court violist as something to look up to. Leopold also references the fact that if the Archbishop is not above playing violin at court, Wolfgang certainly should not be

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<sup>33</sup> Mozart, *The violin concerti*, 16.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

(though perhaps Wolfgang would disagree with this reasoning). Wolfgang would hopefully have seen a bit more merit in playing one of his own duos. The above letter references his negative attitude toward playing violin in symphonies. Surely playing in a smaller chamber music setting would have brought him a bit more musical fulfillment. Indeed, if Mozart's goal was to create virtuosic and specialized music worthy of only the most talented court musicians, he certainly must have enjoyed making these duos so difficult and complex!

## II. FIRST MOVEMENT: *ADAGIO - ALLEGRO*

The temperament of the duo in B-flat Major, K. 424 is a bit more contained and intimate than the duo K. 423. The opening of the G Major duo comes right out and tells you what is happening from the very beginning. The opening of the B-flat Major duo is a bit more reserved and demure. This is illustrated by the beautiful *Adagio* introduction. This introduction is rather unexpected, given that neither the duos of Joseph Haydn nor Michael Haydn contain introductions leading into their expositions. This introduction seems to lend more weight to Mozart's piece as a serious compositional undertaking. It also adds to the operatic nature this duo. This introduction is like an overture, and foreshadows the beauty that is still to come. That Mozart was able to give a work for two string instruments the qualities of an opera certainly highlights his genius.

In the opening *Adagio*, the violin and violin begin with a unified statement at the octave:



Example 26:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, first movement.

This unity immediately sets a different character than that of the G Major duo, in which the violin and viola are constantly at odds. Next, the two instruments sigh together as the violin struggles to express its thoughts. The viola is given some thematic material going into m.5, mimicking the contents of the violin line from m.2. But, this entrance is not an interjection or an interruption. Here, the viola is merely showing solidarity with the expression of emotion coming from the violin. It is really during m.6 that the operatic flavor of this introduction comes to the forefront, when the viola plays a creeping line of thirty-second notes. This tells the listeners that the plot is about to unfold. This is joined by pointed and rhythmic double stops in the violin.

The concord of the opening is brought full circle as the introduction comes to a close as the violin and viola play the same rhythms in mm.9-10, as well as Fs one octave apart. Certainly Mozart could have done without this introduction, and certainly this introduction does not contribute to this piece's task of masquerading as a work by Michael Haydn. But, this introduction adds tremendous depth and dramatic flair to the piece. In hindsight, one could hardly do without it.

The *Allegro* that follows is much more playful in character than the introduction. The violin and viola seem to be getting along with one another nicely, and the violist seems content with its temporarily secondary roll. A motive is brought back to use from

the introduction in the violin line in m.35. Soon the violist catches on and continues this little rhythmic idea whilst the violin launches itself into virtuosic arpeggios. Another enchanting passage follows with the beginning of the second theme in m.43 in F Major, and the piece continues with chirping trills between violin and viola in thirds in m.45. One could imagine this ornamented measure being sung in one of Mozart's operas by two characters flirtatiously laughing at one another. The viola, having been previously denied a chance at the theme, enters with the second theme in the second half of m.51:

44

52

Example 27:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, first movement.

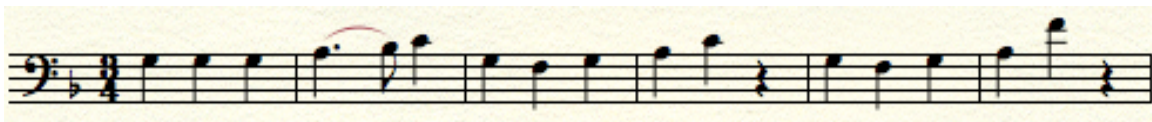
In the following measures, Mozart's use of rests in mm.58-61 is sure to keep the listener on the edge of the seat, as in each measure the violin line is quite unpredictable, with each outburst separated by two beats of rest:

58

Example 28:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, first movement.

To make another case for this piece being quite operatic, one must observe the similarities between this movement and an aria from *Le Nozze de Figaro* entitled “Se Vuol Ballare”, written just three years after this duo was composed. Beginning in m.73 of the duo, the similarities are quite apparent:

37 *Figaro*:



Example 29:  
*Le Nozze di Figaro*, “*Se Vuol Ballare*”, Act I, Scene 3.



Example 30:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K.424, first movement.

In the duo, this operatic motive is used to transition into the development.

In the development, Mozart continues his use of three repeated notes in the motive as the violin moves into a passage marked *dolce*. The violin battles its way up a few sequences, filled with markings of *sfortzando-piano*. The feeling of *dolce* is interrupted with a *forte* marking in m.99. Here, the violin is frustrated after its arduous harmonic journey. The viola simultaneously commiserates with a *passus duriusculus* descending chromatic line of quarter notes:

96

W.A.M. 424.

105

Example 31:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, first movement.

In m.102, the viola begins to mimic both the notes and dynamics of the violin, foreshadowing the impending canon. The G-Minor canon is brought in via another *passus duriusculus* in the viola, this time consisting of ascending eighth notes. Mozart expertly crafts this little canon. It is here where the violin and viola return to the dueling nature found frequently in K. 423. The violin starts the canon at a *piano* dynamic, but in m.107 grows frustrated with being copied by the viola. The violin lashes out with a *forte* dynamic, but the viola soon follows suit. In mm.109-110, the violin gets to have the final say. Much to the violin's dismay, the viola begins a new *piano* canon in m.110, and the violin is forced to follow suit. The viola line wins this time, in mm.114-115, with a final statement utilizing the C string, as if to say, "Ha! Your instrument can't go as low as mine!" In retaliation, the violin begins a new *piano* canon. A stalemate is reached when the violin and viola playing a descending line in sixths in m.119, ushering in the recapitulation. The movement wraps itself up with the return of the "Figaro" theme and two rambunctious *forte* chords.

### III. SECOND MOVEMENT: *ANDANTE CANTABILE*

The *Andante cantabile* movement that follows is one of Mozart's great masterpieces and is the heart and soul of this particular work. Here, there is no struggle for the melody. If the opening movement is an operatic duo for two mischievous lovers, this piece is surely the violin's great love *aria*. Meanwhile the viola provides orchestral accompaniment. The texture of the accompaniment is quite unusual, as the viola is almost constantly playing double stops. This makes for a rich harmony, and the effect that there is more than just one instrument accompanying the violin.

It is difficult to express in words just what it is that makes this movement so magical. It is only forty-one bars in length, but somehow manages to pack in a great deal of emotion and value without becoming too flashy or complicated. Perhaps it is this singing quality of the violin line that makes the movement so effective. Perhaps it is the rhythmic simplicity of the viola line, which only deviates from its quarter note plus eighth note pulse in cadences and in the last four bars of the movement. Possibly it is his delicious use of harmony and chromatic lines. In m.30, for example, the viola holds an E-flat pedal while playing a descending scale, but in m.34, this is subtly varied by adding passing chromatic notes to the scale whilst the violin also joins in on the chromaticism:



Example 32:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, second movement.

The movement ends with operatic scales in the violin line, as it floats up into the ether.

The violin only realizes it is not a human and becomes a violin again, when it plays two double stops in the last measure, bringing an end to its operatic aspirations.

#### IV. THIRD MOVEMENT: *ANDANTE GRAZIOSO*

Mozart returns to his rascalion ways in the third movement with a theme and variations. The theme begins simply in the violin in m.1, and mostly consists of a descending scale:



Example 33:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, third movement.

In the “B” section of the theme, the violin and viola develop a rhythmic germ from the “A” section (a dotted eighth followed by a sixteenth) while the violin this time attempts to ascend the scale:



Example 34:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, third movement.

In the first variation, rather than vary only the violin line, Mozart creates variations for both voices. Clearly he doesn't want the violist getting too bored! For the violin, this is a

variation full of triplets, as the line becomes more involved and virtuosic. The viola is given triplets whenever the violin cadences, in a bid by Mozart to keep the compound rhythm as triplets. The dotted rhythm returns full force with the viola in variation two:

33

**Var. 2.**

37

Example 35:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, third movement.

The violin enters in canon. Things begin to heat up as the violin starts a new canon going into m.37, and the violin and viola play in sixths in m.38. Another canon begins in the “B” section of variation two, but this time the violin enters closer on the violist’s heels, and it lasts a bit longer, and includes abrupt changes in dynamics:

41

Example 36:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, third movement.

The next two variations are full of sixteenth note virtuosity. In variation three, the violist shreds away while the viola plays a simple version of the theme. In variation four, Mozart composes a variation on a variation. Mozart fakes out his audience by starting the

sixteenth note line in the violin pick-up, but it is immediately passed to the viola, and the violin usurps the variation of the theme played by the viola in variation three. Every two bars, the violin and viola swap roles:



Example 37:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, third movement.

After many back-and-forth exchanges between the two lines, and an amazing display of chromatic acrobatics by the viola line in m.70, they finally reach a place of concord in mm.80-81. This is yet another moment of the K. 424 duo that seems quite operatic in nature:



Example 38:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, third movement.

Variation five is the most tranquil of the six variations. The compound rhythm is slowed down to that of eighth notes as they are passed from one instrument to the other:



Example 39:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, third movement.

In the “B” section of the variation, the violin and viola experience a moment of organized chaos when they are given eighth notes simultaneously. These sinuous lines are intertwined in such a way that the violin and viola are often going in opposite directions:



Example 40:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, third movement.

The tempo accelerates in variation 6, marked *Allegretto*. This is the closest Mozart comes to returning to the original theme. The viola line is nearly identical to the opening four measures of the movement, and the violin line is only subtly modified. Here, Mozart is luring the listener into a false sense of security by giving them something familiar. It is as if he is saying, “We are home after a long journey. Please, take off your coat and make yourself comfortable”. However, one should know that with this small tempo change, Mozart surely has something else up his sleeve. He switches suddenly to *forte* in m. 102 and gives the violin a hiccupping figure:

96

101

Example 41:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, third movement.

And, one cannot go without mentioning the charmingly operatic nature of the high Fs in the violin line in m.106. This motive is further developed in a transition to the final variation:

113

Example 42:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, third movement.

The music spirals out of control once more as the compound meter returns to sixteenth notes, the tempo changes to *Allegro*, and even the meter changes from 2/4 to 3/8. The piece comes to a close with a rumbling section of minor seconds in the viola and leaping double stops in the violin, ending with three *forte* triple stops. Mozart's use of the theme and variation form is incomparable to that of Joseph or Michael Haydn. This is mostly due to the fact that he uses the viola line as more than just accompaniment, virtually doubling the possibilities for variance.

## CHAPTER 6: THE EVOLUTION OF THE VIOLA IN THE CLASSICAL ERA

### I. CHANGES IN CONSTRUCTION OF THE INSTRUMENT

Before one can address more specific issues of performance practice, the development of the viola during this time period must be discussed. The size and shape of the viola have never been standardized. Nowadays, the length of a viola's body can vary anywhere from fifteen to eighteen inches. There has been an ongoing struggle to create the perfect viola that is both playable and can create a robust tone. During the classical era, it seems that violas tended to shrink in size as compared with violas of the baroque era. Below is a sampling of viola body lengths along with the dates they were built:

1740- 17 and 5/8 inches  
1750- 16 and 1/8 inches  
1751- 17 and 1/4 inches  
1761- 15 and 13/16 inches  
1774- 15 and 7/8 inches  
1807- 15 and 1/2 inches<sup>35</sup>

Historically speaking, musicians of this time were often switching back and forth between violin and viola, a practice that is still somewhat common today despite the increasing number of viola-specialists. A smaller viola would therefore be easier to play than a larger one, as it would more closely resemble the size of a violin. The body lengths of two violas once belonging to Mozart are known today. One is by Testore, and is less than sixteen inches in length. The other is a Meggni Brescia and is fifteen and three-quarters inches in length.<sup>36</sup> Mozart is a leading example of someone for whom a seventeen-inch viola would prove cumbersome after being used to the size of a violin,

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<sup>35</sup> Maurice W. Riley, *The History of the Viola Volume II*, (Ann-Arbor: Bruan-Brunfield, 1991) 8-112.

<sup>36</sup> Riley, *The History of the Viola*, 132-133.

and it would have been worth the sacrifice in sound production. This reduction of size would also be helpful to the ability of violists to play more virtuosic passages, because it decreases the difficulty of getting one's left hand around the instrument.

## II. THE TRANSITIONAL BOW AND GUT STRINGS

In addition to the evolving size of the instrument itself, bows were also going through changes. They were transitioning from a concave shape to one that was more convex. This would have had an effect on the consistency of sound throughout the bow, as well as the bow's attack. "As music became more technical, bows had to be fashioned to meet the new demands. Usually this resulted in longer and lighter bows. With the increasing emphasis on *staccato* and *spiccato* bowing in the late 18th century, a more resilient wood [pernambuco] was needed for the bow stick."<sup>37</sup>

In describing the temperament of the classical transitional bow as opposed to the modern day bow, Jaap Schröder has this to say:

The sound of a long stroke [on a classical bow] still showed a curved quality like that produced with the baroque bow...and did not have the even 'horizontal' character of its modern counterpart...One could say that the sound of the pre-Tourte bow breathed and had an extreme flexibility; it articulated quite naturally and made a conscious (and intended) distinction between the weightier downbow...and the lighter upbow."<sup>38</sup>

Of course, these factors must be taken into account when dealing with a modern interpretation of a classical work.

Aside from differences in the construction of the bow over time, one of the biggest differences in sound between a period and modern string instrument is due to the

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<sup>37</sup> Riley, *The History of the Viola*, 157.

<sup>38</sup> Larry Todd and Peter Williams, ed., *Perspectives on Mozart Performance*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 120.

change in materials used for strings. An eighteenth-century instrument would have used gut strings. Gut strings have a very dark, rich sound, whereas modern steel strings have a brighter tone. Gut strings are a bit temperamental and can be difficult to keep in tune, whereas modern strings are more accurate. It could be said that gut strings have a more soulful sound, whereas modern strings have a more machine-like quality about them.

### III. THE VALUE OF PERFORMANCES AND RECORDINGS MADE ON PERIOD INSTRUMENTS

If one has no access to a period instrument, gut strings, and a transitional bow, it can of course prove helpful to listen to performances or recordings in which the performers play on period instruments. In listening to a recording of Vera Beths and Jurgen Kussmaul<sup>39</sup> on period instruments, the first thing that becomes apparent is the difference in tuning. The A is tuned substantially lower than A=440. This, in addition to the use of gut strings, makes the color of the instrument's sound much darker, especially in slower movements. The *Adagio* opening of Mozart's K. 424, for example, achieves a depth that does not quite come across in modern recordings played on steel strings and tuned higher<sup>40</sup>. The opening of the G Major duo K. 423, Mozart's violin writing sounds like the beginning of a grand concerto on modern instruments<sup>41</sup>, bright and virtuosic. In

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<sup>39</sup> Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Grande sestetto concertante*, Vera Beths and Jurgen Kussmaul, Sony Classical SK 46631.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *The Duos for Violin and Viola by Mozart & Michael Haydn*, Maya Magub and Judith Busbridge, CRD Records Ltd 263490.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

the period recording<sup>42</sup>, it sounds a bit more like an ornamented line from a beautiful piece of baroque chamber music.

In studying “period instrument” recordings, one cannot determine how these pieces were performed in the eighteenth century. Like any performer, these performers can still only make educated guesses on articulations and phrasings. However, these recordings prove useful in studying many aspects of period instruments: timbre, articulation, ease of dynamic transition, comfort of various tempo choices, etc.

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<sup>42</sup> Mozart, *Grand sestetto*.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: PERFORMANCE PRACTICE ISSUES IN MOZART'S DUOS K.423 AND K.424

### I. A MATTER OF TASTE

There are a number of factors that are up for discussion in the performance practice of any piece. How does one interpret dynamics? How does one decide upon phrasing? What is the exact meaning of each articulation marking? What is the proper balance between instruments in each passage? How does one interpret the tempo? When is *rubato* appropriate? What style of playing is suitable based on its era of composition? Should one focus on a historically accurate interpretation or should one take into account the practices of the present time? What acoustic best suits the piece? There are these questions and more to consider when setting forth on any journey of musical performance, and one must reflect on each of them carefully before making an educated and musical decision. When reaching this decision, one must reflect on what can be considered tasteful. Taste was an important aspect of the performance and composition of eighteenth century music.

In the eighteenth century, there were those whom were considered as having good taste and those whom were not. Most importantly, it seems that good taste was a quality reserved for well-educated men. Voltaire writes:

The connoisseur in music, in painting, in architecture, in poetry, in medals, etc., experiences sensations which the vulgar don't suspect... The man of taste has different eyes, different ears, and a different touch than the coarse man has.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Daniel Cottom, "Taste and the Civilized Imagination", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 39, No. 4 (Summer, 1981): 370, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/430236>.

Johann Joachim Quantz describes good taste in terms of compositional skill in the following passage:

The most beautiful song can eventually become dull if repeated endlessly... a mixture of different ideas is necessary...in every type of musical composition. If a composer knows how to manage this matter successfully, and by this means to inspire the passions of the listener, it may justly be said that he has achieved a high degree of good taste.<sup>44</sup>

But who has the final determination on what is good taste and what is bad? Some would say that good taste is determined by the agreement of the majority. Perhaps in the eighteenth century it was determined by the tastes of the upper class. Kant philosophizes that good or bad taste cannot be truly determined:

The judgment of taste...is not a cognitive judgment and so not logical, but is aesthetic-which means that it is one whose determining ground *cannot be other than subjective*.<sup>45</sup>

Most musicians agree that Mozart had excellent taste. But, there will always be someone who disagrees.

Because taste is somewhat subjective and varies from individual to individual, one has no choice but to use one's own sense of good taste when making performance decisions. One's taste is shaped by the knowledge one has absorbed from teachers, from reading books and articles, and from listening to the performances and recordings of others. In the eighteenth century, Mozart certainly followed his sense of good taste in performance and composition. In the twenty-first century, one has no alternative but to

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<sup>44</sup> Adena Portowitz, "Art and Taste in Mozart's Sonata-Rondo Finales: Two Case Studies", *The Journal of Musicology*, 18, No. 1 (Winter 2001): 130, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jm.2001.18.1.129> .

<sup>45</sup> Stuart Jay Petock, "Kant, Beauty, and the Object of Taste", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 23, No. 3 (Winter, 1973), 183, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/429035>.

use resources that describe eighteenth-century taste, and to combine this knowledge with one's own good taste and judgment. As the French say, "*chacun à son goût.*"

## II. TEMPO

When considering issues of performance practice it is best to start at the beginning, and the first decision to be made when approaching a movement is generally tempo. Choosing a bad tempo has been many a performer's downfall, for tempo surely determines the entire character of a movement or passage. In a letter to his father dated October 24, 1777, Mozart stresses the importance of tempo in a comment directed at one particular performer's poor tempo choices. He writes, "She will never achieve the most necessary, the hardest, and the main thing in music, namely Tempo, because from her very youth she made sure not to play in time."<sup>46</sup> Mozart is being a bit cheeky here regarding the playing of the daughter of a piano manufacturer, Miss Stein. But, Mozart is also putting forth a few well-articulated words on the role of tempo in music. Jean-Pierre Marty writes:

All that Mozart tells us in this passage- and this is of considerable importance- is that tempo is the core of music and that this core, this mysterious element without which music is not really music, is entirely the performer's responsibility. Let the performer play "in time" for a start and let us hope that he will then "achieve" tempo. If that does not happen, the most beautiful music ever composed will be deprived of its very essence.<sup>47</sup>

This is, of course, quite a burden for any performer to bear. No musician wants to be responsible for depriving music of its essence. Leopold Mozart also stresses the importance of tempo in his treatise:

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<sup>46</sup> Jean Pierre Marty, *The Tempo Indications of Mozart* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), xi.

<sup>47</sup> Marty, *Tempo Indications*, xi-x.

Time makes melody, therefore time is the soul of music. It does not only animate the same, but retains all the component parts thereof in their proper order. Time decides the moment when the various notes must be played, and is often that which is lacking in many who otherwise have advanced fairly far in music and have a good opinion of themselves.<sup>48</sup>

Therefore, both father and son were in agreement that time (tempo) is the heart of a piece of music. This is why it is so important to find a fitting tempo for every musical endeavor.

The first movement of Mozart's duo K.423 is marked "Allegro". "Allegro is by far the most frequent of Mozart's tempo indications."<sup>49</sup> One should not grow complacent when one sees such a standard tempo marking and simply take off. There are still a few factors to be considered. This movement is in common-time (4/4), and yet, it is easy to get caught up in a fast movement so that it feels as though it is in cut time. Mozart clearly marks the music as being in cut time when he wants to feel a piece in two. In this particular Allegro, one must maintain the quarter note pulse. Marty writes, "The frontier between Allegro [common time] and Allegro [cut time] is extremely tenuous and consists only in the observation of this rule: keep alive the quarter-note pulse and only the quarter-note pulse."<sup>50</sup> Now that it has been established that a quarter note pulse is required in this particular *Allegro*, one must decide on the pace of the pulse. Leopold Mozart has some advice on this topic as well, and he writes:

Every melodious piece has at least one phrase from which one can recognize quite surely what sort of speed the piece demands. Often, if other points be carefully observed, the phrase is forced into its natural speed. Remember this, but know also that for such perception long experience and good judgment are required.

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<sup>48</sup> Leopold Mozart, *A treatise on the fundamentals of violin playing*, trans. Editha Knocker (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), 30.

<sup>49</sup> Marty, *Tempo Indications*, 34.

<sup>50</sup> Marty, *Tempo Indications*, 35.



ornamentations in the piano concertos, for instance, would be turned into mere technical feats, totally alien to Mozart's aesthetic.<sup>52</sup>

He makes an excellent point that if the *Allegro* is played too fast, the beauty of the sixteenth note passages will be lost. For example, in the very first measure of Mozart K.423 the singing nature of Mozart's composition in the violin line would disappear if taken at breakneck speed. One could even argue that this highly ornamental line suggests a slightly slower speed than quarter note=126. "It is interesting that many reports suggest that Mozart tended to take his *Allegro* movements at a moderate speed. Nowadays movements simply marked 'allegro' are often played too fast."<sup>53</sup> It seems that a relaxed tempo of quarter note=116-120 would do nicely. But as Leopold Mozart tells us, the decision of tempo is ultimately left up to the judgment of the performer. One must not get too concerned with the suggestions of metronome markings made by others, and should instead use one's own taste to derive the tempo that best fits the musical line.

The performer should also take acoustics into consideration when selecting the proper tempo. For an *Allegro*, if the space is very resonant, a great amount of the clarity will be lost. Mozart would have been aware of this when writing his chamber works. These types of works would have most likely have been intended for more intimate performances at court, in fairly resonant rooms. Eighteenth-century composer and flautist Joachim Quantz wrote, "The echo that constantly arises in large places does not fade quickly, and only confuses the notes if they succeed one another too quickly, making

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<sup>52</sup> Marty, *Tempo Indications*, 39.

<sup>53</sup> Eva Badura-Skoda and Paul Badura-Skoda, trans. Leo Black, "Interpreting Mozart on the Keyboard" (New York: St Martin's Press, 1962), 30.

both harmony and melody unintelligible.”<sup>54</sup> Taking this into account, one must be especially careful not to take Mozart’s tempos too quickly when performed in a resonant space.

It was mentioned earlier that the use of the *Adagio* tempo in the second movement K. 423 is quite unusual for Mozart, having been more partial to *Andante*. From the very beginning of this movement, the viola plays an important part in determining tempo. The violin is merely holding a dotted half for the first measure, while the viola establishes the tempo with eighth notes. This type of secondary pulse is quite common in Mozart’s music. Marty points out:

A beautiful example of such a tempo is provided by the *Adagio* introduction of the String Quartet in C K.465 (‘Dissonance’). Even though the dignified and elegiac pace of the quarter notes in the viola and violin parts is the main agent of the *Adagio* tempo, the presence of an eighth-note secondary pulse is relentless from the first to the twenty-second bar.<sup>55</sup>



Example 44:  
String Quartet in C Major, K. 465, first movement.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Forsyth, *Biddings for Music*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 22.

<sup>55</sup> Marty, *The Tempo*, 28.

In the duos (written just two years before), this eighth note pulse only lasts for two bars, but the idea of a secondary pulse is the same. Also, note the similarities between the melodic line in each top violin part:



Example 45:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, second movement.

In the duo, the secondary pulse changes from eighths to sixteenths, and finally to sixteenth note triplets. One must be conscious of the fact that the secondary pulse begins with eighths but becomes faster when choosing the starting tempo. If one starts only with the eighth note pulse in mind, the *Adagio* could easily start out as more of an *Andante*. One must especially keep in mind the triplets beginning in m.34. These must not sound hurried, which means that the opening tempo must be on the slower side. And yet, too slow of a tempo will bog down the violin melody, so one must find a tempo that works with both of these musical ideas. A metronome marking of quarter note equals forty-two to forty-six works quite nicely.

In K. 424, the second movement is marked “*Andante cantabile*”. *Andante* is a much more common marking in the slow movements of Mozart than *Adagio*. Mozart’s addition of the word “*cantabile*” tells the performer that while he doesn't want the movement to be too slow (*Adagio*), the performer is free to take a relaxed *Andante* tempo and play with a more song-like quality, perhaps taking a bit more artistic license with small amounts of tasteful *rubato*.

The *Rondeau* of K. 423 is a cut time *allegro*. “One sees that Mozart felt there were clear differences between *allegro* [cut time], *allegro* [4/4], *presto* [cut time] and *presto* [4/4], etc.; that when he wrote ‘*Allegro* [4/4], he did not mean ‘*allegro alla breve*’, and vice versa. How seldom this fact is taken into account in performance!”<sup>56</sup> It is quite easy to accidentally feel this *Rondeau* in four. After all, the melody begins with four quarter notes. However, the designation of cut time indicates that the pulse should not be felt in four. This would make the movement too pedantic when it is intended to be quite graceful. The tempo should soar playfully forward.

The finale of the duo K. 424 includes three tempo markings: *Andante grazioso* (cut time), *Allegretto* (cut time), and *Allegro* (3/8). Mozart’s desire for the movement to begin more graciously and to gain momentum as the variations continue is made clear by the gradation of these markings. There are tempi suggestions for this very movement in Marty’s book, *The Tempo Indications of Mozart*. He even goes so far as to suggest specific metronome markings. He states:

Since 60/120 is the basic relation of speeds for *Andante* [cut time], the “rule” of two extra metronomic markings should therefore lead to 66/132 for *Andante grazioso* [cut time]; such a relation is perfectly suitable for both the *Andante grazioso* [cut time] section in the finale of the Violin Concerto in D K.218 and the finale (Theme and Variations) of the Duo for Violin and Viola K.424. At [quarter note]=132 the *détaché* sixteenth notes of the concerto and Variations 2, 3, and 4 of the duet sound brilliant without challenging the performer to a technical prowess totally alien to Mozart’s instrumental writing. In the sixth and last variation of the duet a natural acceleration starting with *Allegretto* [cut time] (88/176) will lead to the concluding *Allegro* 3/8 (76/228).<sup>57</sup>

Certainly, it is of the utmost importance not to begin this movement too quickly, or else one runs the risk of spiraling out of control with each subsequent acceleration. If one

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<sup>56</sup> Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Mozart*, 36.

<sup>57</sup> Marty, *The Tempo*, 115.

begins with too fast a tempo, the second and third variations may even have to be slowed down in order to avoid a total train wreck. Marty's point of not "challenging the performer to a technical prowess totally alien to Mozart's instrumental writing" is a good one. Mozart's duos are not meant to sound like Paganini caprices, even if today's musicians are trained to be capable of such technical fireworks. In Mozart's music, this kills the magic of the composition and turns it into something it is not. Marty's suggested tempo marking for the *Andante grazioso* (quarter=132) is a good one. And yet, a tempo a few notches slower could certainly be appropriate to those performers desiring an even more *grazioso* vibe. This would make for an even more dramatic shift to *Allegretto* in m.99. Mozart cleverly reinserts an identical viola accompaniment in mm.99-100 as was used in the beginning of the movement. This serves to make both performer and listener even more keenly aware of the change in tempo, and its relationship to the opening of the piece.

In Mozart, a performer must strive to find one tempo that fits each passage of a movement so that one does not end up catapulting forward or having to yank back on the reins. At the same time, there are moments where a little give-and-take in tempo is necessary. Knowing when to do so and how to do so tastefully may very well be the difference between a so-so performance and a brilliant one:

Audible tempo-deviations within a movement will usually be unnecessary and disturbing in Mozart...the trouble is usually an excessively quick tempo, which Mozart repeatedly stigmatized as a crude offence against good taste. Yet there are places, mostly in the nature of joins, where even a very steady and musical performer will press unobtrusively onward or else hold back the tempo a little. These subtle variations in tempo we call 'agogics'. The use of agogics is what distinguishes a steady player from an unrhythmical one; a rhythmical player will

only vary the tempo to match the sense of the music; an unsteady player varies the tempo indiscriminately.<sup>58</sup>

This use of agogics is basically the eighteenth century's version of *rubato*. A good player will not play with an unsteady tempo, but will when to take a little extra time to bring out this note or that note. But again, one must use one's judgment and taste as one's best guide.

### III. DYNAMICS

One of the greatest problems to overcome in Mozart's music is how to transition between *piano* and *forte* dynamics. Mozart's duos are littered with these two dynamic distinctions, with rare appearances of *mezzo-forte* and *crescendi*. Are each of these *forte* and *piano* markings to be interpreted as *subito* dynamics? Or would an eighteenth-century musician have known to make a somewhat smoother transition? The last recourse would be to interpret each dynamic on a case-by-case basis, and indeed that seems to be the solution when approaching these two works. Frederick Neumann has this to say on the subject:

When the dynamic mark coincides with a motive that has an individuality of its own and that could be ever so slightly detached without hurting the continuity, sudden change will be the likely intention. By contrast, when the dynamic sign is placed in mid-phrase, gradual transition is the more likely solution.<sup>59</sup>

In order to put this advice into effect, one might look at the first movement of Mozart's K. 423 duo. In m.12, the viola line is playing a descending arpeggios at a *forte* dynamic.

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<sup>58</sup> Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Mozart*, 40.

<sup>59</sup> Frederick Neumann, *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1993), 180.



In the first movement of Mozart's K. 424, for example, the music demands a *subito* change in dynamic in mm.26-27. The violin line has just completed a passage of *piano legato* syncopation, and it shifts to a section of pointed triplets:



Example 47:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, first movement.

These musical ideas are quite opposite in nature, and there is no transitional measure in between in which to make the change in dynamics more gradual. A slight breath could even be inserted in order to make this *subito* change more controlled, without changing the intent of Mozart's line.

In m.30, however, the change from *forte* back to *piano* begs for a more subtle transition. This can be easily arranged if the viola utilizes a slight *diminuendo* between beat one and beat two in m.30. This trailing off of the viola line helps to welcome in the following entrance of the violin, and would have likely been quite obvious in Mozart's day, especially given that the first beat should usually be the one that is emphasized, making an inclusion of a *diminuendo* in the score entirely unnecessary.

There is also the issue of what to do with dynamics in long passages in which no change of dynamics is given. Too often musicians take dynamics too literally. If a large passage is marked *forte*, one might become a bit too persistent in trying to play strongly and lose musical phrasing. On the other hand, one might play an entire *piano*

passage too meekly and with intense fear of rising above a *piano* dynamic. In his treatise, Leopold Mozart had this to say on the topic:

It follows that the prescribed *piano* and *forte* must be observed most exactly, and that one must not go on playing always in one tone like a hurdy-gurdy. Yea, one must know how to change from *piano* to *forte* without directions and of one's own accord, each at the right time; for this means, in the well-known phraseology of the painters, Light and Shade.<sup>61</sup>

Here, Leopold gives full artistic license to go beyond printed dynamics. He does not believe musicians should play such that everything sounds like a constant drone. The comparison he draws between musicians and painters is quite apt. One would never expect a painter to use only two colors. A painter may be directed to paint a sky blue, but a skilled painter would certainly use more than one shade. And so in Mozart, there are of course shades of *forte* and *piano*, and these shades must not be forgotten.

In the second movement of K. 424, Mozart does not give any dynamic indications. Is this to mean that the performers must maintain the same level throughout? Certainly this cannot be Mozart's intention. Rather, the violinist must follow its melodic line, changing color and dynamic where appropriate to the musical direction and phrasing. The violist must follow the harmony and do the same. If Mozart had given measure-by-measure instructions in this movement, the calm and dreamlike character would evaporate, leaving both instrumentalists feeling too restricted. Leopold gives some more excellent advice in his treatise:

Finally, in practising every care must be taken to find and to render the effect which the composer wished to have brought out; and as sadness often alternates with joy, each must be carefully depicted according to its kind. In a word, all must be so played that the player himself be moved thereby."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Mozart, *A treatise*, 218.

<sup>62</sup> Mozart, *A treatise*, 218.

In other words, a performer must do that which respects what the composer has written at an artistic level. Rather than taking everything on the page literally, a player must find the sound that best expresses the desired effect of the notes on the page. Surely this means a musician must feel free to play around within the dynamics in order to “be moved”.

But, how does one strike a balance between following what is on the page and following one’s heart, so to speak? Robert G. Luoma gives the following council in his article on the use of dynamics in the classical era:

Dynamics often promote within various context a closer balance, psychologically, between the elements of unity and variety. If the impression of chaos is caused by too much variety, and if monotony is caused by too much unity, anything that helps to avoid either extreme may help to entice a more attentive ear.”<sup>63</sup>

This is excellent general advice for anyone undertaking a performance of Mozart. One must not create chaos with too many dynamic changes unless Mozart makes clear this intention with his own markings of *forte* and *piano*. At the same time one must be careful to avoid monotony. Dynamics cannot simply be about the loud and the soft. The importance of dynamics lies not in the decibel level put out by the instrument. Rather, dynamics must maintain a connection with character, emotion, and feeling. A talented performer may very well be able to create the feeling of a *piano* dynamic but still put out quite a great amount of sound. In terms of dynamics, there is one phrase written by Leopold Mozart that can answer any performer’s question. He states that one must do, “whatever belongs to tasteful performance of a piece.”<sup>64</sup> Obviously, tastes shift from

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<sup>63</sup> Robert G Luoma, "The Function of Dynamics in the Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven: Some Implications for the Performer," *College Music Symposium* 16 (1976): 33, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40373374>.

<sup>64</sup> Mozart, *A treatise*, 216.

century to century. One must respect the musical tastes of Mozart's era while respecting one's own tastes, and that is where the difficulty lies.

#### IV. ARTICULATION

There are myriad problems when it comes to deciphering the intended articulations in a score from the classical era. Articulations are similar to dynamics in that a great deal of information needed to perform them properly is not on the page. This is of course due to assumed practices of the time. Today, everyone is overly obsessed with following exactly what is on the page. One might say, "Mozart wrote a two eighth notes here with no articulation markings. They must last one half beat each and be played legato". This perhaps seems an obvious enough assumption when playing a more contemporary work, but would Mozart have followed these same rules? One must turn to scholarly writings and treatises of the time in order to attempt to unravel the mysteries of late eighteenth century rules of articulation.

There are a bevy of articulations that can be created on stringed instruments. "Only the voice and the strings have the full range of articulatory potential."<sup>65</sup> But of course, with great potential comes great responsibility. The full range of articulation at a string player's disposal increases the possibility of selecting the wrong articulation. In Mozart's music, there is much debate over his use of staccato markings and "wedges". Robin Stowell explains here that are two schools of thought on the subject:

[In Mozart's manuscripts] dots may resemble dashes, or vice versa, raising the question of whether a distinction was intended between the two. Indeed many scholars have argued for the creation of a wide range of staccato shadings to

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<sup>65</sup> Neumann, *Performance Practices*, 187.

accommodate these inconsistencies... Few theorists suggest any differentiation between the interpretation of dots and dashes”<sup>66</sup>

When looking at a facsimile of Mozart’s manuscript closely, one sees instantly that he is impeccably tidy with regard to his choice of notes, slurs, dynamics, and markings<sup>67</sup>.

Therefore, it is hard to believe that he would make two such distinct markings, without intending a distinction be made. But, one must also keep that his scores contain quite a few ambiguous markings. Some markings look as if they could be wedges, but they may also be hastily scribbled staccato markings:



Example 48:

Left: Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, third movement.

Right: Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, first movement.

Bottom: Duo for Violin and Viola K.423, first movement.

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<sup>66</sup> Larry Todd and Peter Williams ed. *Perspectives on Mozart performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 133.

<sup>67</sup> Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Zwei Duos für Violine und Viola*, ed. Ulrich Drüner (Amadeus, 1980).

Neumann gives the following conjecture as to the meaning of Mozart's staccato marking inconsistencies:

Mozart used [the stroke] deliberately in the following three ways: (1) to indicate an accent without a staccato; (2) to indicate a staccato with special emphasis of either accent or sharpness, ranging from hail to heavy rain; (3) to mark a staccato, usually without special emphasis, that serves to separate clearly a single note from a group of slurred notes...The 'gray area' follows as fourth category<sup>68</sup>

It seems quite improbable that Mozart would use so many markings that fall into a "gray area". One can surmise that in this case, Mozart did not distinguish a monumental difference between staccatos and wedges. Why would he risk making particularly long looking staccato markings or particularly short looking wedges if there was a chance of them being grossly misinterpreted? "Mozart is generally quite meticulous in other aspects of notation, e.g., in pitch, rhythm, and dynamics. Thus, it would seem inconceivable that he could have been so careless with the use of dots and strokes if they had meant different things to him."<sup>69</sup>

It seems that in his duos, Mozart most often utilizes the wedge marking as part of Neumann's third category, "to mark a staccato, usually without special emphasis, that serves to separate clearly a single note from a group of slurred notes."<sup>70</sup> This is completely understandable. Of course separating a note from a group of slurred notes changes the entire phrasing of a musical line, so it makes sense that Mozart would want to mark this very clearly:

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<sup>68</sup> Neumann, *Performance Practices*, 234.

<sup>69</sup> Robert Riggs, "Mozart's Notation of Staccato Articulation: A New Appraisal", *The Journal of Musicology*, 1, no. 2 (Spring, 1997): 240, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/764045>

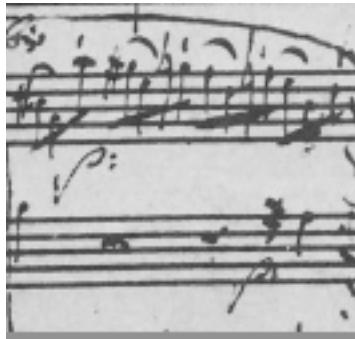
<sup>70</sup> Neumann, *Performance Practices*, 234.

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Example 49:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, third movement.

In the scores published by Henle<sup>71</sup> and Amadeus<sup>72</sup>, mm. 30 and 32 are marked with wedges. It seems probable that Mozart does not mean to accent these notes, but to merely separate them from the surrounding notes:



Example 50:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, third movement.

The overall dynamic is *piano*, and an accent could be too disruptive. Also, it seems clear when singing through the musical phrase that the first note of each triplet should be emphasized.

Since even Neumann agrees that this marking is usually non-emphasized, wouldn't it stand to reason that all "wedge" markings should be without emphasis, thereby retaining the properties of a *staccato* marking? This claim is difficult to make across the board. One must return now to the matter of using one's taste. One cannot

<sup>71</sup> Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Streichduos für Violine und Viola*, Ed. Anja Bensiack (New York: G. Henle, 1997).

<sup>72</sup> Mozart, *Zwei Duos*.

create hard and fast rules in situations such as these. If accenting what seems to be a wedge interferes with the music, one should assume that an accent is not appropriate. If using an accent where a wedge is mark fits the character of the phrase, why not use an accent? The question of right and wrong can sometimes get in the way of a musician's interpretation of a piece.

In Mozart's compositions, it may also be difficult to decipher in which instances one should use a *legato* articulation, and in which instances a more detached staccato stroke may be appropriate. In contemporary compositions, this seems obvious. One plays more *legato* when nothing is indicated, and one plays more separated when one the score instructs one to do so. In music by Mozart and in other compositions of the classical era, the notation is not so cut and dry. In slower movements, it was customary for musicians to play everything in a more legato style unless notated, but in faster movements there are some unwritten rules, explained here by Heinrich Christoph Koch in his *Musikalisches Lexikon* of 1802:

In *Adagio*, *Largo*, *Lento* and similar pieces in slow tempo, all notes which are to be played staccato should be marked with one of the specific staccato signs, as the ordinary manner of performing such pieces requires the notes to be played with a long bow and smoothly connected with each other. In fast movements, however, there are numerous kinds of passages which musicians customarily play staccato without any special instructions to this effect.<sup>73</sup>

Leopold Mozart explains this matter similarly in his treatise:

So must one not play continuously with a lagging, heavy stroke, but must accommodate oneself to the prevailing mood of each passage. Merry and playful passages must be played with light, short, and lifted strokes, happily and rapidly; just as in slow, sad pieces one performs them with long strokes of the bow, simply and tenderly.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Todd, *Perspectives*, 136.

<sup>74</sup> Mozart, *A treatise*, 223.

In the opening of Mozart’s K.423 *Rondeau* for example, the “prevailing mood” is exactly as Leopold describes: merry and playful. Therefore, the violin and viola must play with “light, short, and lifted strokes”, despite the lack of dots in the score. This is especially important with the *forte* entrance of the viola. The viola must change dynamic without wholly changing the character. If the viola were to come in with a “lagging, heavy stroke”, this passage would sound like a heard of angry elephants, which is perhaps not the picture Mozart is attempting to achieve in this spot:



Example 51:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, third movement.

The importance of avoiding too much steady bow pressure detailed by Jaap Schröder:

Clearly it is the bow which brings the music to life; when the bow ignores the breathing quality of the music as a result of constant pressure, players look for a different way to enliven the performance. During the nineteenth century this task fell to the newly invented *portamento*; our century has adopted the constant vibrato. But both these devices stand in the way of musical clarity...And lack of clarity is damaging to the scores of Mozart.<sup>75</sup>

Clarity of articulation is key to a successful performance of these duos, and a bow that is able to breath must be used throughout, even in the more *legato* passages.

In today’s society, it seems more and more as if human beings are all too used to being spoon-fed every detail on every subject. A precise answer to every question is

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<sup>75</sup> Todd, *Perspectives*, 121.

anticipated, and one can look up the solution to practically any problem on the Internet. With modern compositions, one expects every articulation to be indicated on the page. Some composers go as far as to write dynamics for each and every measure in order to micromanage the phrasing within a piece. With the music of the classical era, however, it is clear that not everything is given on the page. One must use one's research and imagination, infer the intended spirit of the music, and select an articulation that suits the music accordingly.

## V. VIBRATO

A big game changer in sound production over the last 200 years or so has been the increased use of vibrato. With changes in musical taste through the romantic era, and the desire for longer more luscious *legato* lines, use of constant *vibrato* has become ubiquitous. It seems that use of *vibrato* in the classical era was common, but not meant to be used overzealously. Leopold Mozart describes *vibrato* (“tremolo”) in his treatise on violin playing. He states:

Now because the tremolo is not purely on one note but sounds undulating, so would it be an error if every note were played with the tremolo. Performers there are who tremble consistently on each note as if they had the palsy. The tremolo must only be used at places where nature herself would produce it... For at the close of a piece, or even at the end of a passage which closes with a long note, that last note would inevitably, if struck for instance on a pianoforte, continue to hum for a considerable time afterwards.<sup>76</sup>

Above all, Leopold Mozart is imploring performers to be tasteful with their use of *vibrato*. This is excellent advice to take heed of when performing works from the

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<sup>76</sup> Mozart, *A treatise*, 203-204.

classical era. Obviously, when to use *vibrato* is not something that is notated in a printed score. Therefore, one's personal taste and preference is all one is left with.

Jaap Schröder suggests that one strong argument against constant use of *vibrato* is the necessary use of open strings in Mozart's works:

The clarity of the open string is a great virtue, and the brightness of its sound should be matched by the stopped notes. In the present case an embellishing vibrato can be applied to certain notes, but we have to bear in mind that vibrato belongs to the category of ornaments, and has to be used with discernment. It should relax and warm up the note in question, but not add more tension (as the modern vibrato usually does).<sup>77</sup>

The use of open strings in Mozart's music can create a wonderful color. But of course, one cannot effectively vibrate open strings. The solution is clear: the use of *vibrato* should not be so frequent that the use of open strings would create too disturbing a contrast.

For instance, in the first measure of the *Adagio* of Mozart K. 424, the viola is best served to play its second note on open D in order to avoid disturbing string crossings. Given that string players are most prone to playing with large amounts of *vibrato* in slow tempos, this could be a very dangerous place. Instead of worrying about creating a long and luscious line, one must create an honest and tranquil tone, one that naturally compliments the use of open strings. This does not mean that no *vibrato* can be used. Rather, one must select *vibrato* when it best compliments the phrasing. In this case, the phrase is going toward the third beat:

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<sup>77</sup> Todd, *Perspectives*, 120.



Example 52:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, movement one.

In order to avoid the open string of the viola sounding deadened as compared with the rest of the measure, one must begin with minimal *vibrato*, and only apply generous *vibrato* to this third beat if one is not desirous of one's Mozart sounding like a Brahms sonata. Of course, there are many moments in which *vibrato* is entirely appropriate. But, one must assess use of *vibrato* on a case-by-case basis, rather than applying to generously to every note.

## VI. PHRASING

The term “phrasing” seems to need no definition, and yet it is a word that can be quite difficult to define. Perhaps one of the reasons for this difficulty is that the term “phrasing” encompasses so many different components. Neumann notes the following:

Phrasing consists of identifying the internal organization of a musical work and clarifying it in performance. All elements of music enter into this organization: melody, rhythm, harmony, counterpoint, dynamics, articulation.<sup>78</sup>

Everything discussed thus far in regards to performance practice has a role in determining phrasing. And, as one's taste determines factors such as dynamics, articulation, and tempo, so does it determine the phrasing. There can be no one correct way to phrase a line, but there certainly are ways that are more tasteful than others.

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<sup>78</sup> Neumann, *Performance Practices*, 259.

In a measure of music in 4/4 by a composer of the classical era the basic rule was that, “the first beat of a 4/4 bar received the most emphasis, the second less, the third more than the second but less than the first, and the fourth less again.”<sup>79</sup> This concept seems obvious enough, but can easily be forgotten when one’s mind gets absorbed in other matters. Still, this basic principal must be followed most of the time. In movements where Mozart gives a meter marking of cut time, this ranking of strong and weak beats becomes even more important:



Example 53:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, third movement.

One is already in danger of emphasizing too much every quarter note, as the melody and accompaniment are both built with quarter notes, and as the tempo is marked “Andante grazioso”. At a slower tempo than *Allegro*, one runs the risk of making a cut time movement sound to heavy. But, if one can successfully follow the hierarchy of the beats, it is quite easy to feel this movement in two instead of in four. The viola can be especially helpful by shaping the accompaniment. In this case, the viola would be advised to shape m.2 towards the first beat of m.3, emphasize slightly the third beat of m.3, then bring out the down beat of m.4, then taper away through the end of m.4. Following these rules universally can be quite dangerous, however. If one were to bring out the third beat of m.4, this would counteract the overall phrase. Therefore, when putting this rule into effect, one must keep in mind the melodic and harmonic contour. The third beat of m.4 is

<sup>79</sup> Todd, *Perspectives*, 144.

the end of a four-bar phrase, and it would not be tasteful to land on the third beat with a thud. Perhaps such a thing could work if this movement were a drinking song. But instead, one is given a simple *grazioso* opening theme.

Another issue of phrasing pertains to the interpretation of Mozart's slurs as phrase markings rather than simply as bowings:

The expressive quality of the slur was foremost in the minds of late eighteenth century performers. Traditionally, the first note under a slur was gently stressed... after which the others were played evenly and legato, becoming gradually softer.”<sup>80</sup>

There are many instances in which this *decrescendo* of slurred notes can be quite charming, such as in m.189 of the G Major *Rondeau*:



Example 54:  
Mozart Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, third movement.

Without following this rule, one could interpret m.189 as requiring a continuous *legato*. But, this interpretation belongs more to the romantic era. If the violinist slightly tapers within each slur marking, the bow is instantly infused with the air and space required to make Mozart's line sing. One must imagine this measure being sung by a singer in a Mozart opera. A singer would naturally leave space in between each slur here. “Parallels between instrumental performance and the human voice (either in speech or vocal

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<sup>80</sup> Todd, *Perspectives*, 138.

performance) were commonly cited by theorists when considering the shaping and colouring of phrases.”<sup>81</sup>

Still, can one interpret all of Mozart’s slurs as requiring a *diminuendo*? Carl

Schachter states:

I think it would be wrong to apply Leopold’s idea rigidly and indiscriminately; playing slurred notes in a decrescendo can often produce musically unconvincing performances, at least to my ear.<sup>82</sup>

Here we have yet another case in which applying a rule to every situation simply does not work, and one can get oneself into dangerous territory:



Example 55:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, second movement.

Here, the harmony in the viola is given occasional slurs, which seem to occur in places where Mozart wants to bring out the harmonies. In m.2, the G in the viola is pulling very strongly towards the A-flat in m.3. If one were to taper the viola’s slur in m.2 and return to a normal level in m.3, this would break up the viola line too dramatically. In this case, there are two options. One might do a small *crescendo* to point out this leaning of the harmony towards m.3, or one might do the *diminuendo* in m.2, but then fade even further into the downbeat of m.3. The latter is the more *mysterioso* approach. The slur in the violin part of m.3 is also original to Mozart’s manuscript, but seems odd as a phrasing

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<sup>81</sup> Todd, *Perspectives*, 139.

<sup>82</sup> Carl Schachter, “20th-century analysis and Mozart Performance”, *Early Music*, 19, no. 4 (Nov., 1991), 624, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/3127925>.

marking, as clearly the change in harmony in the second half of the measure needs to be brought out slightly. Perhaps this slur is merely meant to aid in keeping a more peaceful quality in the music without too much unnecessary activity. In other words, the harmonies speak for themselves without too much unnecessary commotion from bow changes. “The apparent simplicity of Mozart’s phrases requires an unpretentious interpretation that reflects his own violin technique, a technique that was based on that of the baroque masters.”<sup>83</sup>

The idea of taking time to bring out the important notes in a phrase, as discussed in the chapter on tempo, was not completely absent in the classical era. In his *Clavierschule*, Daniel Gottlob Türk writes:

The more important notes should be prolonged and emphasized, and the less important ones played more quickly and with less emphasis, in the way that a sensitive singer would sing the notes or a fine orator would declaim the words.<sup>84</sup>

Sometimes by keeping time too strictly, the proper phrasing will be impossible to achieve. The occasionally necessary deviation from time was discussed in the chapter on tempo, but it has just as much to do with phrasing, as it is the phrasing that determines where this deviation is appropriate. For example, the opening of Mozart’s G Major duo should not sound too mechanical. It should be playful and exuberant. If the violinist takes no time here and relies too strictly on the given note durations, some of the charisma is lost:

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<sup>83</sup> Todd, *Perspectives*, 118.

<sup>84</sup> Todd, *Perspectives*, 143.



Example 56:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, first movement.

The violinist should take a small amount of time in m.1 on the high B. This will keep the ornaments from sounding rushed and it will bring out the importance of the third beat, which is also the high point of the measure.

## VII. PERFORMING MOZART IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

All of these regulations of eighteenth-century performance practice must now be brought into the present. The question is: how far should one go in order to give a historically accurate performance? There are certainly many views on this matter. Some believe one should delve into research and entirely follow the letter of the law. These are the musicians who believe a performance of Mozart cannot be authentic except when played upon a period instrument. Performances of Mozart on period instruments are no without value. But, can one really say that a historically correct performance is more authentic than one on modern instruments? Richard Taruskin writes:

My position in the War of the Buffoons can be simply stated. I have suggested that the ancients and moderns ought to exchange labels. What is usually called ‘modern performance’ is in fact an ancient style, and what is usually called ‘historically authentic performance’ is in fact a modern style.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Richard Taruskin, “Tradition and Authority”, *Early Music*, 20, no. 2, Performing Mozart’s Music III (May, 1992), 311, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/3127887>.

His point is a good one. The concept of a ‘historically authentic performance’ is a modern one. Therefore, a modern recreation of a work in an eighteenth-century style is still a modern interpretation. In Mozart’s day, one would have been doing modern performances of musical works, and so doing a modern performance of a work by Mozart is quite an old idea. Both methods can be considered authentic, but neither method is really authentic. It is a musical catch-22.

Laurence Dreyfus sheds some light on this matter with this suggestion of compromise:

I would rather like to imagine that one can arrive at an engaged interpretation of Mozart without, on the one hand, paying blind obeisance to current-day mainstream standards or, on the other, succumbing to a naïve historicism that pretends to ‘speak the language of the 18th century.’<sup>86</sup>

Indeed, nobody can truly recreate the musical language of the eighteenth century. But is it necessary to copy exactly the style of another performer or another time period? Would Mozart have listened to a performance of Haydn performing a piece by Haydn and copied his phrasing, articulations, and dynamics exactly? One likes to think Mozart had a bit more imagination than that.

In terms of the usefulness of playing on period instruments, Schröder helps articulate how playing on these instruments can lead to a new understanding of how to perform Mozart in the present without necessarily needing performing them on period instruments in a concert:

It is certainly possible to achieve a workable compromise with modern instruments. In calligraphy the old quill pen is the ideal tool, but once we have mastered this art of beautiful writing and know how to differentiate the

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<sup>86</sup> Laurence Dreyfus, “Mozart as Early Music: A Romantic Antidote”, *Early Music*, 20, no. 2, Performing Mozart’s Music III (May, 1992), 298, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/3127886>.

individual strokes, we will be able to produce artistic results even with a fountain pen.<sup>87</sup>

He makes an excellent point about using period instruments as a teaching tool. One doesn't necessarily have to fall in love with playing on a period instrument and perform on it at all times, but one can get a first hand experience on what, for example, Mozart's bow would have felt like playing on gut strings, and what sorts of articulations and tones would have resulted. This kind of knowledge can be invaluable.

Fortunately, bringing a work of Mozart's to the present day music scene doesn't only involve manuscripts and treatises. In his article, Schachter discusses the benefits of performing the compositions of Mozart:

Artur Schnabel said that he liked to play music that was better than it could be performed. Mozart's music would certainly fit this description... And I am sure that performers who try to match the structural richness, emotional depth and easy, unpretentious perfection of Mozart's music in their approach to playing and singing become better performers, and not only of Mozart.<sup>88</sup>

It is true that Mozart's music often seems "better than it could be performed", as there are so many fantastic and delightful details incased in each measure. These less palpable aspects of Mozart's music are exactly what make it so special. Emotion and imagination are timeless, and these things cannot be forgotten in place of historical accuracy.

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<sup>87</sup> Todd, *Perspectives*, 125.

<sup>88</sup> Schachter, "20th-century analysis", 620.

## CHAPTER 8: EDITIONS OF THE MOZART DUOS

### I. SELECTING A GOOD EDITION OF MOZART'S DUOS AND THE TROUBLE WITH URTEXT EDITIONS

There are plenty of editions of to chose from when selecting a score for Mozart's duos. A novice musician may look at a selection of scores with no idea of the vast differences between them. "For the beginner...laboriously seeking out the notes and glad if he can find them, the problem 'Which edition to chose?' hardly yet exists."<sup>89</sup> Many will blindly select a score based on factors such as price, thinking that surely every published edition would be accurate. But, as these musicians progress in their musical career, they may soon come to realize just how many discrepancies there are between each edition, going even so far as to have different pitches from one another, and certainly having great disparities in interpretation of dynamics and articulation:

Every musician at some time reaches the point when he starts to feel uneasy about an edition which he has previously accepted uncritically; perhaps an articulation-marking will strike him as odd, or a forte in a passage where he feels he should play softly.<sup>90</sup>

As discussed in a previous chapter, figuring out Mozart's articulation markings can be especially treacherous, and they vary wildly from edition to edition:

Editors of Mozart...have often sinned against his spirit, but nowhere more frequently and seriously than in their treatment of his articulation markings; they have made alterations and additions, adding markings and omitting others, without clearly indicating that they have departed from the text found in Mozart's manuscript. Specialist knowledge of this subject is rare.<sup>91</sup>

As any seasoned musician knows, finding the best score for a piece of music can be quite challenging. There are many factors to be taken into account. Of course, it is always a

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<sup>89</sup> Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Mozart*, 127.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 53.

good idea to select an *Urtext* edition of the score whenever possible. But, there is one major problem with *Urtext* editions, and that is the fact that they are still edited. The word *Urtext* is often misleading in musical scores. The word means literally “original text”. But, wherever there are uncertainties with the original manuscript, the editor will often make a choice without noting it in the comments. Is it unreasonable for a publisher and editor to leave comments for every single decision they make in an edition? The average performer would likely not bother to read through all of these comments, at any rate. But, the use of the word *Urtext* leads even the most intelligent musicians to assume that what is printed must be an accurate representation of the manuscript, even if changes have been made:

Unfortunately there are even many *Urtext* editions which do not stand up to the demands made upon them by a musician who is really in earnest. Often there are still many errors, distortions of the original and foreign additions.<sup>92</sup>

One must actually lay one’s hand on a facsimile of the manuscript to be able to deduce the important differences between the two.

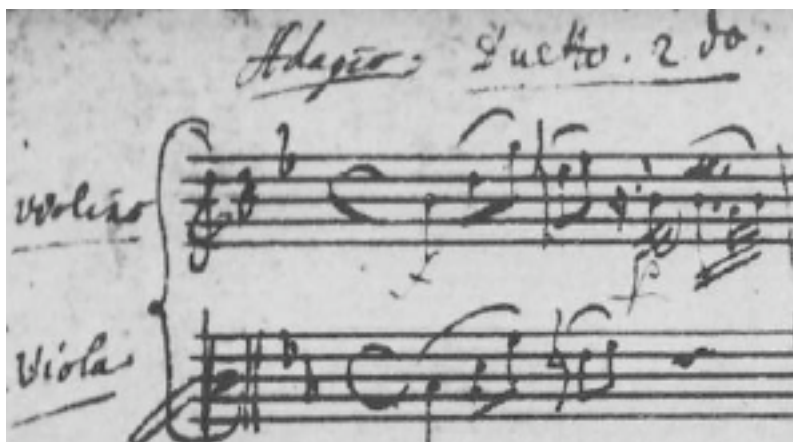
One example of a poor choice made in the *Urtext* edition published by Henle<sup>93</sup> occurs in the first measure of the duo K. 424. In the Henle edition, the articulation in the first two beats of the viola part is altered to match the violin by separating a slur that Mozart clearly notates in the manuscript. The editor mentions this change in the comments, but what it does not mention is that there is clearly better option. When viewing the facsimile<sup>94</sup>, it is the articulation in the viola line that is most clear. The violin line, however, is ambiguous:

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<sup>92</sup> Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Mozart*, 127.

<sup>93</sup> Mozart, *Streichduos für Violine und Viola*.

<sup>94</sup> Mozart, *Zwei Duos für Violine und Viola*.



Example 57:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, third movement.

It looks as though Mozart also meant to slur the first two beats in the violin, but that his slur appears to start a bit late on the page. Why not change the ambiguous marking to match the clear one? The separated slur also leads to a much more pedantic phrase and disturbs the calm nature of the opening measure. It also disturbs the feeling of leading to beat three, which the harmony demands.

There are lots of other instances where Mozart's markings cannot be determined with certainty.

Ambiguities remain...in Wolfgang's autographs over dynamic markings, slurs, staccato dots and vertical dashes, which are not always carefully drawn or consistently applied. Slurs are sometimes begun too soon on the page and ended too late.<sup>95</sup>

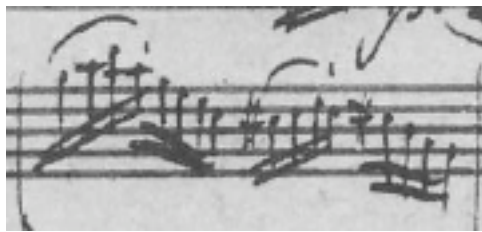
In m.19 of the Henle edition<sup>96</sup> of the first movement of K.423, for example, the editor notates four sixteenth notes, with a slur over each of the four notes, but with a wedge on the fourth sixteenth note of the set. This could lead to some very unique phrasing. When looking at the facsimile<sup>97</sup>, however, it becomes clear that this interpretation is incorrect,

<sup>95</sup> Todd, *Perspectives*, 133.

<sup>96</sup> Mozart, *Streichduos für Violine und Viola*.

<sup>97</sup> Mozart, *Zwei Duos für Violine und Viola*.

despite not being mentioned in Henle's comments. With this wedge, Mozart clearly means to separate this fourth note from the slur. In the first beat of m.19, Mozart's slur ends a little too late, which is the cause of this confusion. But, in the third beat when the same idea is repeated, Mozart's slur clearly ends prior to the fourth sixteenth note. This third beat clarity, in combination with knowledge of eighteenth-century performance practices, makes the choice of articulation clear: the first three sixteenths must be slurred, and the last sixteenth separated. In addition to aiding the articulation, this also makes the bowing much simpler. Mozart, being a violinist himself, would not have written such awkward bowings in a passage that is meant to sing:



Example 58:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, first movement.

There are some instances in which some *Urtext* editions will stick to the manuscript, even in cases where previous editions have made alterations and these changes are now considered part of the norm. In the case of wrong notes, performance choices can get quite difficult. If an edition of Mozart that has been used for decades includes a note not indicated in the manuscript, this note often becomes common practice. If a performer is to look back to the manuscript and play the note as originally notated, they will often be accused of playing a wrong note, when they are indeed playing a wrong note! Perhaps a learned audience member will tilt their head and make a sour face in disgust, as they are so used to the way they have heard it in previous performances and recordings. Differences in notes can be much more noticeable and jarring than, for

instance, playing a wedge in place of a dot or changing a slur. What then, is a performer to do? In m.76 of the first movement of K. 423, for example, beat four is often played with a C-sharp. Indeed, most recordings contain this C-sharp, as does the Barenreiter edition<sup>98</sup>, likely the most used edition by performers over the last few decades. This C-sharp turns the chord into a German augmented sixth. It sounds great, but it is what Mozart intended? Henle's edition states in the comment section, "Some later editions place # in front of the penultimate eighth-note...However, neither [autograph manuscript] nor [first edition] contains this accidental!"<sup>99</sup> This is the only place in which the editor uses an exclamation point in the comments section, so one can tell that she certainly means business! In terms of this added German augmented sixth chord, one may suppose that Mozart did not intend it as he did not write it:



Example 59:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, first movement.

But, perhaps he'd have wished he thought of it. Deciding to change a composer's pitches could be a very slippery slope, so it seems best not to condone such editorial behavior.

There is also, of course, the issue of grace notes and ornaments. Mozart used varying notations for such things, but often they are misrepresented in even the best

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<sup>98</sup> Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Duos für Violine und Viola*, Ed. Dietrich Berke. (Kassel: Barenreiter, 1979).

<sup>99</sup> Mozart, *Streichduos für Violine und Viola*, 29-30.

editions. The Amadeus edition discusses the performance practice issues regarding Mozart's grace notes in great detail:

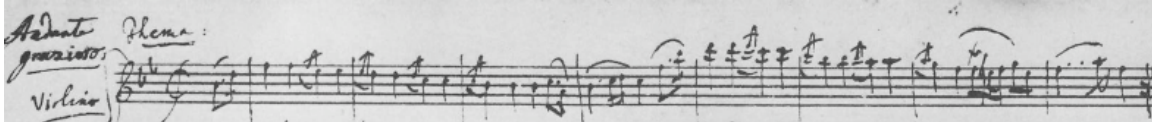
The grace notes are noted in their original form: [eighth note], [eighth note with slash], or [eighth note with two slashes]. The first are always long appoggiaturas, taking half the time-value from the main note. The [slashed] grace notes are short as a rule; but Mozart occasionally uses them as slurred appoggiaturas... The grace notes [with a single slash] and [with a double slash] must be seen as identical in meaning.<sup>100</sup>

And indeed, this edition does a wonderful job of rendering with care exactly the grace note that Mozart notated in his manuscript. It is also helpful that they give this explanation in their preface. Of course, this is merely a suggestion. For example, they state that grace notes with a single slash are to be interpreted the same as grace notes with a double slash, but they do not go as so far as to standardize them in their printed *Urtext* edition. The Henle edition<sup>101</sup>, however, diverges once more from the manuscript. It often turns the grace note with a single slash into a sixteenth note. Such a simple change may be said to have a negligible impact on a performance. But, when one sees a sixteenth note, one is tempted to play a precise sixteenth note. When one sees an eighth-note grace note with a single slash, one thinks of a chirping ornament. While the duration of these two notes may be the same, one could go so far as to say that the phrasing would be changed. One seems a bit heavier, the other a bit lighter. In the theme of the final movement of Mozart's duo K. 424 for example, the grace notes determine the entire opening character:

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<sup>100</sup> Mozart, *Zwei Duos für Violine und Viola*, IV.

<sup>101</sup> Mozart, *Streichduos für Violine und Viola*



Example 60:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, third movement.

Should not a musician be given the opportunity to see the notation exactly as Mozart wrote it, especially when it comes to *Urtext*?

The variances described between the editions above are fairly minor, but in some cases a performer must be extremely wary! The Peters edition<sup>102</sup> is laughably far from recreating Mozart's manuscript, and yet it contains a facsimile of the first page of Mozart's manuscript. This must be a tricky ploy by the publisher to make the edition look scholarly. In fact, the edition is full of so many mistakes, missing notes, and editorial additions and subtractions of dynamics and articulations that it is hardly worth discussing further.

Mozart's compositions are extremely masterful and detailed. He seems to give the performer everything they need for a successful interpretation. Therefore, one owes it to him to look past whatever edition is convenient, and consult a manuscript or facsimile whenever possible:

The least we can do for a great master such as Mozart is try to find out his intentions even in the smallest points... Aware of his responsibility to the composer and to the whole of our musical culture, the artist is prompted to observe with the utmost exactness the text handed down to him, irrespective of whether anyone praises him for it. This sense of responsibility is, in the last analysis, what distinguishes the true artist from a charlatan who is concerned only with success.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Duos, Violine und Viola K.V. 423, 424* (New York/London: C.F. Peters, 1952).

<sup>103</sup> Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Mozart*, 127.



Example 61:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, first movement.

## CHAPTER 9: JOSEPH HAYDN, MICHAEL HAYDN, AND WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

### I. JOSEPH HAYDN VS. MOZART

It is quite well known that Mozart respected the music of Joseph Haydn a great deal. Just one year before Mozart composed his duos, he began writing a set of string quartets that he later dedicated to Haydn. “When they were published by Artaria in 1785, an accompanying letter of dedication to Haydn described them as ‘the fruit of a long and laborious study.’”<sup>104</sup> Mozart scrutinized Haydn’s brilliant quartet writing, but also brought his own compositional genius to the table. These six quartets do not merely copy Joseph Haydn’s style of composition. They can be described as, “ambitious technically, superbly original, yet nevertheless steeped in Haydn’s idiom.”<sup>105</sup> Mozart uses Haydn’s quartets as a sort of jumping off point for his quartet compositions. In this same way, Mozart may have used Haydn’s duo sonatas for inspiration.

Einstein also points out that there are definite similarities between the slow movements of Mozart’s K. 424 duo and Joseph’s Duo in B Major Hob. VI: 3. Mozart’s melodic and harmonic lines bear a striking resemblance to those of Haydn’s composition! “The contemporary master from whom Mozart learned most... was the elder of the brothers Haydn.”<sup>106</sup> Another similarity that can be found in both their writing styles is the use of canon. Haydn utilizes the following canon in the development of the first movement of his duo in D Major:

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<sup>104</sup> Grave, *The String Quartets*, 14.

<sup>105</sup> Grave, *The String Quartets*, 14.

<sup>106</sup> Einstein, *Mozart*, 126.



Example 62:  
Sonata for Violin and Viola Hob.VI: 4, first movement.

Mozart frequently utilizes a similar effect in his duos, such as in the development of the first movement of his duo in G Major:



Example 63:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 423, first movement.

Mozart uses a more complex canon in the development of the first movement of his duo in Bb Major:



Example 64:  
Duo for Violin and Viola K. 424, first movement.

## II. MICHAEL HAYDN VS MOZART

When attempting to better understand the relationship between the Mozart and Michael Haydn, this little snippet from Alfred Einstein's book is sure to amuse and enlighten:

The Mozart family looked askance at the private life of Michael Haydn and his wife; the letters are full of disparaging remarks... about Michael's great fondness for beer and wine, and about his peasant ways (though Wolfgang finds him 'dry and smooth')- for example Leopold remarked on 29 June 1778, when Michael, while playing the organ in the Cathedral during a solemn *Te Deum*, had been slightly tipsy: ... "Haydn would drink himself into dropsy in a few years, or at any rate, as he is now too lazy for anything, would go on getting lazier and lazier."<sup>107</sup>

And so we can see that perhaps Wolfgang and Michael had something in common, which is that Leopold criticized both composers for their questionable conduct:

After the Munich production of *Idomeneo* in 1781, Leopold Mozart accused his son of revelling in pleasures and amusements after his arrival in Vienna. Mozart justified his folly (Letter of May 26 1781): "That I was afterwards too gay was only due to youthful folly. I thought to myself, where are you going to? To Salzburg! Well, you must have a good time... Do have confidence in me; I am no longer a fool, and still less can you believe that I am either Godless, or an ungrateful son!"<sup>108</sup>

Clearly Leopold hadn't much tolerance for the shenanigans of either composer. But still, Leopold respected both men for their musical talents, and Mozart especially liked Michael Haydn's compositions. "This did not prevent the Mozarts, father and son, from entertaining the greatest respect for Michael Haydn as a musician."<sup>109</sup>

It has been established that Mozart's duos reflect knowledge of Joseph Haydn's compositional techniques, but what of the compositional techniques of Michael Haydn? Supposedly these works were to be presented to Archbishop Colloredo as works of Michael Haydn, and if so, certainly Mozart would have to keep this in mind when composing these two works.

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<sup>107</sup> Einstein, *Mozart*, 126.

<sup>108</sup> Peter J. Davies "Mozart's Manic-Depressive Tendencies. 2," *The Musical Times*, 128, no. 1730 (Apr., 1987): 193, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/965420>.

<sup>109</sup> Einstein, *Mozart*, 126.

### III. THE STORY OF MOZART'S COMPLETION OF MICHAEL HAYDN'S DUOS: FACT OR FICTION?

And so, what are the similarities between Mozart's pieces and those of Michael Haydn's? All six duos are in three movements. They all have somewhat shorter slow movements. In the duo by Mozart K. 423, Mozart's *Adagio* tempo is clearly in line with the tempo selection that would have been made by Michael Haydn. Mozart also chooses *Rondo* form for the final movement of K. 423 and theme and variations for K. 424, forms that Michael Haydn also uses. Mozart also selects keys that are different than the four used by Michael Haydn (the six pieces together are in the keys of C, D, E, F, G, and B-flat). "Among the devices Mozart uses to camouflage his authorship are the chirping grace notes and trills in the opening movement of K. 424 and the popular tunes in the finale of K. 423."<sup>110</sup>

Mozart was certainly talented enough that he would be able to mimic the work of another composer:

It is worth bearing in mind, when studying these charming pastiches, that one of Mozart's specialties was an ability to imitate other composers perfectly. Five years before writing these duets he had remarked, in a letter to his father, 'As you know, I can more or less adopt or imitate any kind and any style of composition.' But it must also be added that Mozart became interested, indeed involved, in these little duets and ended up writing two miniature masterpieces."<sup>111</sup>

However, there is one major flaw in the theory that Mozart intended to mimic the work of Michael Haydn, and that flaw happens to be Mozart's brilliant writing for the viola. It is a dead giveaway. Surely Mozart would have known this. Perhaps Mozart wanted to make a fool out of the Archbishop Colloredo? Maybe he knew the Archbishop would be

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<sup>110</sup> H. C. Robbins Landon, *Mozart The Golden Years*, (New York: Schirmer Books, 1989), 90.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

incapable of picking up on such obvious differences in style. Mozart could have thrown in a few similarities for fun, but made it just different enough so that he could laugh at his former employer. Or, there is also the possibility that the entire story is made up by Michael Haydn's students. If nothing else, it is a great anecdote. And, in examining these works side by side, one can truly see the innovative genius of Mozart's writing for the viola.

## CONCLUSION

One can never be certain about the circumstances under which Mozart's duos were written. Whether the story handed down by two of Michael Haydn's early biographers is true is anybody's guess. What one can be certain about, however is that Mozart's duos are a cut above the rest. In the words of Joseph Haydn to Leopold Mozart in 1785:

Before God and as an honest man I tell you that your son is the greatest composer known to me either in person or by name. He has taste and, what is more, the most profound knowledge of composition.<sup>112</sup>

Here again, one is confronted with this matter of taste. Mozart's taste is untouchable in terms of late eighteenth century composition. Musicians owe it to him to let their own good taste be their guide in making musical decisions pertaining to his compositions. Without using one's own taste and good judgment, one can never create a convincing and moving performance of a work by Mozart. Using knowledge of eighteenth century performance practice as a guide can be extremely useful. Studying Mozart's original manuscripts can be an almost transcendent experience. But, there will always be something in the eighteenth century performance treatises that doesn't seem to apply to a particular musical situation. There will always be some note or marking in a handwritten manuscript that seems a little unclear. C.P.E. Bach wrote, "for every case covered by even the best rule...there will be an exception."<sup>113</sup> And, it is in these moments of exception that one's taste must be one's guide. That intangible element of musicality that makes each musician different from the next is what Mozart relied upon in composing

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<sup>112</sup> Dreyfus, *Mozart As Early Music*, 298.

<sup>113</sup> Carl Schachter, "20th-century", 625.

these pieces with his own excellent taste, and still, hundreds of years later, it is what a performer must rely upon in bringing this music to life in the twenty-first century.

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