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Researching History and Performance Practice Regarding Improvisation and Ornamentation in Mozart's Keyboard Works, with Special Attention to Cadenzas

Josiane Merlino

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**RESEARCHING HISTORY AND PERFORMANCE PRACTICE
REGARDING IMPROVISATION AND ORNAMENTATION
IN MOZART'S KEYBOARD WORKS,
WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO CADENZAS**

Josiane Merlino

**Dissertation submitted
to the School of Music
at West Virginia University**

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Doctor of Musical Arts in
Piano Performance**

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ABSTRACT

RESEARCHING HISTORY AND PERFORMANCE PRACTICE REGARDING IMPROVISATION AND ORNAMENTATION IN MOZART'S KEYBOARD WORKS, WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO CADENZAS

Josiane Merlino

The purpose of this paper is to examine the history and background of several keyboard works by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) and to consider how that research influences interpretation and shapes performance practice, with special attention to the composition of stylistically appropriate and historically informed cadenzas.

First in the paper, I talk about some aspects of performance practice including tempo, pedaling, articulation, and differences between Mozart's piano and modern pianos. Next, I discuss the importance of theoretical analysis and researching biographical events in a composer's life to know historical context of a piece. Ultimately, opportunities that are not notated in the score for improvisation and ornamentation, specifically in the concertos, are discussed. This includes an examination of cadenzas written not only by Mozart, but also by other composers, and consummately, a submission of two original cadenzas as well as lead-ins for the C Major concerto, K. 467.

Mozart's music demands careful consideration and sufficient research in order to understand the intricacies and nuances that are so characteristic to his pieces. The performance of his works for keyboard requires thorough assessment of technical demands, theoretical concepts, historical context, and aesthetic quality, to determine the most historically appropriate approach to performance practice. Many pieces are explored, with special attention to the following four pieces: Sonata in A minor, K. 310; Rondo in A minor, K. 511; Concerto in C major, K. 467; and Concerto in E-flat major, K. 482.

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Introduction

Artur Schnabel (1882-1951) is quoted as having made what seems to be a contradictory remark about Mozart's piano sonatas: "The sonatas of Mozart are unique; they are too easy for children, and too difficult for artists."¹ What he means is that, while learning movements of a sonata seems simple enough on the surface, upon further evaluation, the performer realizes that much more is present than immediately meets the eye. Schnabel's statement certainly applies to all of Mozart's music in all its vastness and varied genres.

Mozart's music possesses inherent beauty and purity, requiring precise articulation, sensitive shaping, and clear tone. Each facet of this seemingly simple music demands careful consideration and sufficient research in order to understand the intricacies and nuances that are so characteristic of Mozart's compositional style. Additionally, researching biographical events of the composer's life can provide the performer with clues as to how to interpret a piece. The performance of Mozart's music for keyboard requires thorough assessment of technical demands, historical context, and aesthetic understanding to determine the most historically appropriate approach to performance practice.

This paper considers many of Mozart's pieces, with special attention to the following four works: Sonata in A minor, K. 310; Rondo in A minor, K. 511; Concerto in C major, K. 467; and Concerto in E-flat major, K. 482. There is also an examination of cadenzas, not only by Mozart, but by other composers as well, with respect to stylistic appropriateness and historical performance practice. The paper concludes with the submission of two original cadenzas and

¹ Quoted in Solman, Joseph. *Mozartiana: Two Centuries of Notes, Quotes, and Anecdotes about Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*. (New York: Walker, 2002.) 121.

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lead-ins to Mozart's Piano Concerto in C major, K. 467, which I believe to be historically informed and stylistically appropriate for performance within this specific concerto.

Chapter 1: Performance Practice Observations

Problematic Performance Attributes

Some aspects to consider when determining how to perform any piece of piano music include tempo, dynamics, pedaling, articulation, and ornamentation. Also, it is important to take great care to research whether or not it is appropriate to improvise within the piece. The tempo indication is the first thing that the performer should observe when beginning to learn a piece, even before playing the first note. Not only does the tempo marking tell the performer how fast or slow to play the piece, but it can also inform as to the character or “feeling” of the piece. In his *Violinschule*, Mozart's father, Leopold Mozart (1719-1787), published the following statement regarding tempo:

It is true that at the beginning of every piece special words are written which are designed to characterize it, such as “Allegro” (merry), “Adagio” (slow) and so on. But both slow and quick have their degrees. ... So one has to deduce it (the tempo) from the piece itself, and it is this by which the true worth of a musician can be recognized without fail.²

The younger Mozart also meant what he wrote regarding tempo markings and it greatly irritated him to have to hear his music played at an inappropriate tempo. It is essential to note that *Allegro* means happy, merry, or joyful and should not be played too fast. If Mozart wanted something to be played fast, he marked it *Presto* or *Allegro assai*. Friedrich Rochlitz, editor of the *Leipzig Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, a music journal published by Breitkopf and Hartel, wrote, “Nothing roused Mozart to livelier protest than did the botching of his compositions when

² Badura-Skoda, Eva, and Paul Badura-Skoda. *Interpreting Mozart: The Performance of His Piano Pieces and Other Compositions*. (New York: Routledge, 2010.) 71.

performed in public, mainly through excessively fast tempos.”³ On the contrary, his often-used *Andante* marking should be calculated carefully and not be played too slowly, as it connotes walking, flowing, or moving. It is not to be confused with *Adagio*, which in fact means slowly. Many of Mozart's “slow movements” bear an *Andante* indication; in fact, ten of his twenty-seven concertos include slow movements marked *Andante*. In a letter to his father, Mozart cautioned his sister about his piano concertos, imploring, “I beg you to tell her that in no concerto should there be an *adagio* but only *andante*.”⁴

Mozart's most widely used tempo marking in his piano concertos is *Allegro*, appearing twenty times, unadorned, in the first or third movements—sometimes both. He often qualifies the term with additions: *Allegro assai*, *Allegro vivace*, *Allegro aperto*, *Allegro di molto*, *Allegro vivace assai*, *Allegro maestoso*, *Rondo allegro*, or *Allegro ma non troppo*. Counting these additional uses of *Allegro* brings the total to 36 appearances over the course of his 27 concertos. *Adagio*, meaning slowly or relaxed, is only used twice, both times in late works. However, *Larghetto* shows up five times; too often, this term is incorrectly regarded as “slower than *Adagio*,” when it actually means “somewhat slow.” *Allegretto* is used five times, one of which is in the second movement of the F Major concerto, K. 459. The performer should take great care not to play this movement too slowly—it should flow. *Allegretto* means quickly, but a gentle, flowing tempo will suffice for this movement because the pervasive sixteenth notes provide the listener the illusion of a quick tempo. In his book, *Mozart's Piano Concertos*, Marius Flothius hypothesizes that the reason for Mozart's tempo indication of *Allegretto* for this particular slow movement (and his general avoidance of the *Adagio* marking) is because of the “rather short tone

³ Ibid., 73.

⁴ Flothius, Marius. *Mozart's Piano Concertos*. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001.) 57.

of the instruments of the time,” and also because Adagio would fit better into a “higher” form (such as a string quartet), while the piano concerto possesses a more “social” character.⁵

Andante is an enigmatic marking for a number of reasons. Foremost, Mozart bedecks *Andante* with additional words to suggest a slightly faster or slower tempo. For instance, *Andante cantabile con espressione* denotes a more sustained, expressive, singing character with agogic freedom, whereas *Andante grazioso* indicates a slightly quicker, more lilting feel. Conversely, when Mozart uses *Andante* by itself, the performer still encounters problems figuring out the composer's intentions. Consider the Rondo in A minor, K. 511, in 6/8 time, marked *Andante*. If the pianist feels the “walking” beat on 1 and 4, i.e., two macro-beats to the bar, the sixteenth notes seem frenetic and the 32nd notes are practically unplayable. However, if the walking tempo corresponds to the micro-beats (1-2-3-4-5-6) then the tempo overall plods and it is nearly impossible to sustain the singing line. Did Mozart simply mean a general “flowing” tempo, or did he mean it literally to specifically correspond to a “walking” speed of the notes within the framework of the meter? Is it okay to find a happy medium? These are difficult questions that baffle even the scholars.

Additional clues about the proper tempo can be found in the time signature. Paul Badura-Skoda points out that Concerto No. 19 in F Major, K. 459, is the only concerto whose first movement is marked *Allegro* and *alla breve*.⁶ This does not mean that the movement should be played twice as fast as other movements marked *Allegro*; rather, the *tactus* should be felt “in two,” giving the music a quicker “feel.”⁷ It is also the first concerto whose subdivisions of the

⁵ Ibid., 57.

⁶ Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Mozart*, 82.

⁷ Irving, John. *Mozart's Piano Concertos*. (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2003.) 219.

beats are triplets. Every other preceding concerto, most of which are in 4/4 time, subdivides the beats into sixteenth notes. Flothius also notes that the triplet figuration in the piano part is “conditioned by the quicker tempo.”⁸

Mozart enthusiast Cuthbert Girdlestone provides some editorial commentary on the tempo markings of the C Major concerto, K. 467, in his exhaustive resource, *Mozart and His Piano Concertos*. He writes, “The first movement is headed *maestoso*, a mark which should be observed and not replaced in practice by *brillante*, as is done by some musicians who consider they know what Mozart wanted better than Mozart himself.”⁹

Pedaling

Alongside tempo, one of the most heavily debated topics is whether or not it is acceptable performance practice to use the damper pedal in Mozart's keyboard works. Some purists insist that it is never appropriate to use pedal. Some pianists apply the pedal liberally, much to the dismay of Cuthbert Girdlestone. He simply states, “clarity is the one quality which is always in season.”¹⁰ He likens the stylistically erroneous mannerism of depressing the “loud pedal” during a rising scale and emphasizing the last note with a sforzando to “the uncorking of a bottle.”¹¹ It is the responsibility of the executant to determine a satisfactory compromise of pedal usage to assimilate into a stylistically pleasing performance. As a performer, I think that Mozart's music should be played in a way that is becoming of the modern instruments that we have at our disposal—with judicious use of pedal for color and some blending.

⁸ Flothius, *Mozart's Piano Concertos*, 86.

⁹ Girdlestone, Cuthbert. *Mozart and His Piano Concertos*. (New York: Dover Publications, 1964.) 332.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 95.

Mozart owned a pianoforte that was equipped with a knee-lever that functioned much like a modern pedal. It lifted the dampers, allowing the strings to resonate freely. Mozart very much enjoyed his damper-lifting knee-lever, as explained by Mozart scholars Paul and Eva Badura-Skoda in their comprehensive reference book, *Interpreting Mozart*: “The answer to the question of whether it is historically correct to use the damper-lifting device (in modern language: *pedal*) when playing Mozart's piano works should never be a matter of yes and no but only one of when and how often.”¹² Mozart's student for a short while, Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837), affectionately nicknamed the damper-lifting device a *Südendecker*, or “sin-coverer,” as a result of what he also called “fashionable abuse” of the device—but, Paul Badura-Skoda thinks that Hummel's words should not be taken too seriously. His remarks may have led to the false assumption that he and Mozart (and other musicians during their time) rarely used the damper-lifting device.¹³ Mozart confirmed his approval of the damper-lifting device in a letter he wrote in 1777 regarding the piano in his home built by Johann Andreas Stein, saying, “I played all my six sonatas by heart again several times. ... The last one in D [K. 284], sounds exquisite on Stein's pianoforte. The device too which you work with your knee is better on his than on other instruments.”¹⁴ Generous use of the pedal, while carefully ensuring clarity of harmony, is quite suitable, even encouraged, in Mozart's piano music, and the following musical examples illustrate why.

Consider the second movement of his Sonata in D major, K. 311, mm. 86-89. Mozart specifically notates quarter values in the bass. It is physically impossible, except for a curiously gigantic hand, to connect the quarter notes in the bass with finger legato because of the wide

¹² Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Mozart*, 23.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

span in the tenor voice. It is necessary to change the pedal at least on every beat to sustain the bass voice, lest this beautiful passage sound choppy.

Example 1. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Sonata in D major, K. 311, II. *Andantino con espressione*, m. 86-89.

More frequent pedal changes, however, will ensure that the octaves in the right hand do not become blurred. In the second measure of the musical example above, the little notes need to connect seamlessly to the principal notes that they precede, but the performer must take great care so as not to smear the *appoggiaturas*—neither into their principal notes nor into the harmonies outlined by the left hand. By changing the pedal on the first two sixteenth notes of each beat while holding the bass for the value of an eighth note, this blurring problem is eliminated entirely and the singing melody and beautiful harmonies can be projected with utmost clarity and ease. Furthermore, incorporating the pedal into this exquisite passage adds some welcome color.

Another example of using the pedal to connect notes and sustain note values occurs in the Variations on a Theme by Gluck, K. 455, in the eighth variation.

Example 2. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Variations on a Theme by Gluck, K. 455, Variation VIII, m. 141-143.

At the proper tempo, the left hand notes on the downbeats will be executed *staccato*, if the performer is at all concerned with accuracy. This is exactly how to play the variation, keeping the notes in the left hand as short as possible, not only to capture the character Mozart intended, but also because catching them with the pedal and changing on every beat ensures that they are held their full, intended value. However, changing the pedal on every two beats not only solves the problem of sustaining the notes, but also increases the output of volume by the accumulation of sound and color, which is entirely in keeping with the comedic and fun character of this variation.

Not only is the pedal useful for connecting legato notes, but it is also effective in adding a variety of tone colors to the music to enhance its inherent beauty. Badura-Skoda feels strongly about this issue, and writes that “To play Mozart without the magic of a richly varied tonal palette is not only inartistic, it is stylistically unidiomatic.”¹⁵ Consider the first movement of Sonata in A Major, K. 331, mm. 59-60, in the minor variation.

¹⁵ Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Mozart*, 9.

Example 3. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Sonata in A major, K. 331, I. *Andante grazioso*, Variation III, m. 59-60.

The fact that Mozart went to the trouble to contain the octaves under a long slur emphasizes the need for a legato sound. Finger legato only goes so far, in this case. Changing pedal on every sixteenth note is possible, if the performer is extremely coordinated. But, it is very difficult to maintain the tempo and flow of this variation with the distraction of chaotic pedaling. To remedy this situation, strategic half-pedaling and changing on every eighth note can create a beautiful, ethereal, dreamy effect.

Arpeggios are another instance where pedaling is necessary. The term *arpeggio* is derived from the term *arpa*, meaning “harp.” The harp naturally sustains sound unless the harpist dampens the strings with the hands, so creating this effect on piano naturally calls for the strings to resonate freely. On the harpsichord, where there was no damper pedal, arpeggios needed to be sustained with the fingers—to accommodate this, Johann Sebastian Bach devised a method of notation to show that he intended for the individual notes of the arpeggios to be held with the fingers to give the aural illusion of sustaining.¹⁶ Consider the passage below in his Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, BWV 903, in which Bach notates his arpeggios as chords. This method of

¹⁶ Badura-Skoda, Paul. *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard*. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993.) 23-25.

notation is much easier to decipher at first glance, but confusing and difficult to execute. If only Bach would have had a damper-lifting device!

Example 4. Johann Sebastian Bach, Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, BWV 903, m. 44-46.

Mozart generally notated his arpeggiations in full; instances of this abound in his C minor Fantasy, K. 396. Louis Biancolli, author of *The Mozart Handbook*, asserts that the C minor Fantasy is infused with influence from Bach, but the presentation is not imitative in style.¹⁷ Consider mm. 45-46.

Example 5. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Fantasy in C minor, K. 396, m. 45-46.

Aside from necessary use of the pedal to sustain notes their intended value or for attaining varied tonal colors, another reason why pedaling is imperative is Mozart's use of

¹⁷ Biancolli, Louis Leopold, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. *The Mozart Handbook. A Guide to the Man and His Music. Compiled and Edited by L. Biancolli.* (World Pub. Co.: Cleveland & New York, 1954.) 522.

portato notes. *Portato* in Italian means “to carry” and it is conveyed in the music by staccato notes under a slur. Whether the notes move or stay the same, *portato* is an open invitation to depress the pedal. Effective *portato* is achieved not by sharply striking the strings as in a true *staccato*, but rather by gently applying pressure to the strings to coax a smooth sound that “carries” the sound from one note from the next. *Portato* notes should usually be executed detached with the fingers, but connected by the pedal. *Staccato* is distinct from *portato* in the way that silence is essential between staccato notes; therefore the use of pedal is inappropriate.¹⁸ Many *portato* passages exist in the Variations on a Theme by Gluck, K. 455, in the ninth variation, marked Adagio. One such passage is as follows:

Example 6. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Variations on a Theme by Gluck, K. 455, Variation IX, m. 185-186.

The measure of *portato* notes should be interpreted with great direction leading to the tonic on the downbeat of the next bar. To achieve the necessary direction and subsequent increase in volume appropriate for this cadence, lifting the dampers to amass sound is a must.

¹⁸ Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Mozart*, 28-30.

Additional Differences Between Mozart's Piano and Modern Pianos

In addition to the knee-lever damper-lifting device, another characteristic of Mozart's pianoforte (his own personal instrument as well as most other pianofortes of his time) was the compass of the keyboard. In terms of the modern piano, the range of his keyboard spanned from F₁ to F₆, a mere five octaves. It is not at all necessary to inspect the keyboard on which Mozart composed; we can ascertain the scope of his keyboard just by observing the range of his compositions—everything he wrote for keyboard consistently falls within these pitch boundaries.

Whenever Mozart would have “run out of notes” during the necessary transposition for recapitulations or other transposed repeats, without fail he would always rewrite the passage in an interesting manner, slightly breaking the exact transposition, thus accommodating the limited reach of his keyboard. Some of the most obvious instances of these clever adjustments occur in the Concerto No. 19 in F major, K. 459. Note the sequence found in the exposition, and the corresponding sequence in the recapitulation. Here, he altered the sequence in the recapitulation to “fit in” all the necessary notes. Each pattern ends on the top F rather than extending the arpeggio beyond as the sequence in the exposition did.

Example 7. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto No. 19 in F major, K. 459, I. *Allegro*, m. 173-176.

Example 8. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto No. 19 in F major, K. 459, I. *Allegro*, m. 348-351.

In the following piece, the Sonata in D major, K. 576, Mozart employs interesting chromaticism in the recapitulation to accommodate the bounds of the keyboard. Here is a passage from the exposition of the first movement of the Sonata in D Major, K. 576.

Example 9. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Sonata in D major, K. 576, I. *Allegro*, m. 53-58.

In the corresponding passage in the development, instead of transposing down a fourth into the tonic, he transposes up a fifth, and “compresses” the diatonic run into a chromatic one, to avoid using notes that would have fallen above the top F on his keyboard.

Example 10. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Sonata in D major, K. 576, I. *Allegro*, m. 155-160.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Analysis and Historical Context

Technical considerations aside, other factors in determining the interpretation of a piece include form, key, and historical context. Mozart only wrote a handful of pieces in a minor key, but each of those pieces is hearty and large-scale; each also bears significant weight within his entire compositional output. The Rondo in A minor, K. 511, follows suit and serves to represent one of Mozart's deepest compositions for solo piano in a minor key. Aside from the Adagio in B minor, K. 540, the Rondo is probably his most substantial independent piece for solo piano.¹⁹ Unlike another independent piece in rondo form, the "Little Rondo" in F major, K. 494, which later became the third movement of the Sonata in F major, K. 533, the Rondo in A minor was never added to a sonata later.²⁰ The piece is highly chromatic; Mozart employs anguished descending chromaticism, indicative of lamentation, sorrow, and suffering. In *The Mozart Compendium*, H. C. Robbins Landon writes that this piece is "emotionally charged...flooded with detailed figuration, and...inscrutably chromatic."²¹ The first four notes of the piece set the stage for intense chromaticism to follow: an upward turn on the dominant employing the interval of a half step in either direction.

¹⁹ Landon, H. C. Robbins, Gerald Abraham, and Donald Mitchell. *The Mozart Companion: A Symposium by Leading Mozart Scholars*. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969.) 196.

²⁰ Kinderman, William. *Mozart's Piano Music*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006.) 88.

²¹ Landon, *The Mozart Companion*, 222.

Example 11. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Rondo in A minor, K. 511, m. 1-8.

The first episode, in F major, begins the same way as the theme, with an upward turn; but the intervals are adjusted to accommodate the transposition to a major key.

Example 12. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Rondo in A minor, K. 511, m. 31.

After the conclusion of this hopeful episode, there is a lengthy transition back to the theme in which Mozart uses thematic transformation in several ways, which I will enumerate. But first, take a look at the passage of interest:

Example 13. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Rondo in A minor, K. 511, m. 69-74.

He employs inversion, augmentation, and transposition of the three grace notes in the opening “siciliano” as William Kinderman names it. D#-E-F-E is restated in the upper voice in the above passage as Bb-A-G#-A, transposed to turn around the tonic in half steps as it turns around the dominant in half steps, a fifth higher, at the very beginning of the piece. Even more representative of this highly charged chromaticism is a string of eight *descending* chromatic tones in the above passage: Bb-A-G#-G-F#-F-E-D#. This mirrors (inverts) the eight *ascending* chromatic tones of the first four measures: A-Bb-B-C-C#-D-D#-E, as you can see in the excerpt below.

Example 14. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Rondo in A minor, K. 511, m. 2-3.

The second episode, in the parallel major, continues cohesion to the theme by repeating the final cadence as the opening motive in major. In *Mozart's Piano Music*, William Kinderman describes this echo in the parallel major as a “cheerful transformation of the cadence.”²²

Example 15. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Rondo in A minor, K. 511, m. 88-90.

Although in the brighter key of A major, this section proceeds with quiet restraint, displaying heavy chromaticism, and functions somewhat like a development section, as it does not stay in major for very long. After cadencing in the tonic at measure 112, the episode progresses harmonically down to the relative minor, then to the subdominant, which serves as an

²² Kinderman, *Mozart's Piano Music*, 90.

Italian augmented-sixth chord leading to C-sharp major, the raised mediant, at measure 116. This is of utmost significance because #III is the most distantly-related key to the tonic. Mozart highlights the impact of this surprise in m. 116 by a chromatic upward sweep in the previous measure with a natural crescendo and a *subito* piano on the downbeat. A characteristic unique to this piece is downward chromatic motion in the bass line; mm. 118-122 are certainly no exception as the #III progresses to the dominant. In m. 121, Mozart breaks the pattern of descending half steps to utilize a Neapolitan-sixth chord that resolves upward to the dominant via the $\text{vii}^\circ 7/\text{V}$. Take a look below at this intense chromaticism. Execution of this passage with a panorama of dynamic contrast to emphasize the harmonic adventurousness is a must.

Example 16. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Rondo in A minor, K. 511, m. 118-122.

The musical score for Example 16 shows measures 118-122 of Mozart's Rondo in A minor, K. 511. The score is in 6/8 time and A minor. It features a piano (p) dynamic in measure 118, a forte (f) dynamic in measure 119, and a piano (p) dynamic in measure 120. The right hand has a melodic line with chromaticism, and the left hand has a bass line with chromaticism. The lyrics 'cre - scen - do' are written above the right hand.

Mm. 122-128 serve as an extension of the dominant, leading back into the tonic parallel minor and the return of the theme. The final statement of the theme in m. 169 flips the melody down to the left hand while the right hand decorates with chromatic figuration. The melodic notes in the left hand conveniently imply a very interesting and intense harmonic progression, requiring careful delivery to build intensity appropriately to the end of the phrase.

Example 17. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Rondo in A minor, K. 511, m. 169-173.

An additional facet of this piece that is unique and a rare occurrence in Mozart's works is the strong dissonance found in the last six bars. These dissonances in the tenor voice, upon closer examination, reveal an augmentation, inversion, and transposition of a fifth of the opening theme, which enters the texture unaltered in the right hand above the statement in the tenor.²³ Perhaps this is derived from the right-hand melody in the first four measures of the piece, with Mozart's uncharacteristic use of the Neapolitan harmony, made particularly dissonant by its appearance over a pedal tone tonic.

Example 18. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Rondo in A minor, K. 511, m. 177-179.

The rondo is a gem among Mozart's compositions, in part because of Mozart's extremely thorough use of articulations and dynamic markings. Paul Badura-Skoda suggests that Mozart may have composed this piece with the exhaustive inclusion of articulations and dynamic

²³ Kinderman, *Mozart's Piano Music*, 91-92.

indications to serve as a model of how to interpret his other keyboard works, or to use for teaching purposes.²⁴

Biographical Considerations

Apart from necessary considerations of performance practice, the adaptation of Mozart's music to the modern piano, and the technical issues that arise, the other important factor to consider when researching a piece is biographical details. It is helpful to know the circumstances in a composer's life when a particular piece was composed—understanding pertinent information is often beneficial to forming the performer's concept and interpretation of a particular piece. Mozart's great Piano Sonata in A minor, K. 310, was composed during his stay in Paris, around the time of his mother's death. In *The Compleat Mozart*, Neal Zaslaw and William Cowdery suggest that Frau Mozart's death "perhaps...gave rise to a deep sense of loss that...drove him toward a more turbulent minor-keyed creativity."²⁵ On the contrary, William Kinderman includes a quote taken from Mozart's biography by Wolfgang Hildesheimer. He proposed,

Mozart's works in the minor are so rare that when we do suddenly come upon them we prick up our ears and search for a particular motivation...Let it be understood that we seek, not an occasion, not an external cause, but the determining factor within the sequence of his works. Of course, we seek in vain. Is it really a decision for "the tragic"? Since we have no definition for a musical equivalent of what we call in words "the tragic," the question cannot be answered.²⁶

²⁴ Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Mozart*, 28-30.

²⁵ Zaslaw, Neal, and William Cowdery. *The Compleat Mozart: A Guide to the Musical Works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*. (New York: Mozart Bicentennial at Lincoln Center, 1990.) 311.

²⁶ Kinderman, *Mozart's Piano Music*, 90.

In contrast yet again, Neal Zaslaw suggests that perhaps Mozart's motive for composing such a turbulent piece is his heartbreak caused by a lengthy separation from Aloysia Weber, with whom Mozart had recently fallen in love.²⁷ Whatever the case may be, whether some life event prompted Mozart to compose in this way or not, this piece demands to be appreciated for its compelling artistic merits, fascinating innovations, and deeply stirring emotional expression. And although it remains unclear whether Mozart's mother's death served as inspiration for the composition of the A minor sonata, the theory seems quite logical and this idea will be discussed below.

This piece is one of two sonatas in a minor key. Unlike the C minor sonata, K. 457, which is stately and bold, the A minor sonata is skittish and angry-sounding, with the sharp repeated notes in the opening motive, the march rhythm, the unflagging sixteenth notes suggesting tumult and unrest, and the dissonant grace note.

Example 19. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Sonata in A minor, K. 310, I. *Allegro maestoso*, m. 1-2.

The strict march rhythm, as well as turbulent dynamic contrasts, appears throughout the entire movement, and dissonances pervade the tumultuous, highly contrapuntal development section. As a supreme master of *galant*-style composition, Mozart perhaps may be tapping into

²⁷ Zaslaw, Cowdery, *The Complete Mozart*, 311.

the more emotionally charged version, the *Sturm und Drang* style, which was fashionable around this time.²⁸ By examining the first movement alone, it becomes clear that this piece fits the bill for Mozart's few minor-key pieces being very large-scale and significant.²⁹

Typical second themes of Mozart's sonata-allegro-form works contrast with the first themes not only in key area, but also in that they often possess a more lyrical and relaxed character when juxtaposed against the often energetic first theme that precedes it. Mozart brought the *galant* style to its apex with his delightful, enchanting melodies. He exhibited an uncanny understanding of the human voice, and that quality shines through in his instrumental works. Even the melodies in his instrumental works are lyrical, memorable, and singable. On the contrary, the second theme of this particular sonata is comprised solely of unrelenting sixteenth notes and therefore not singable at all. The perpetual motion of the sixteenth notes in this second theme suggests a feeling of unrest, especially when considered in comparison to some of Mozart's other second themes.

Example 20. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Sonata in A minor, K. 310, I. *Allegro maestoso*, m. 22-26.

The passage in Example 20 is just the first four measures of a breathless eight-measure phrase with no respite from constant sixteenth notes. The closing theme proceeds in the same

²⁸ Landon, *The Mozart Companion*, 211.

²⁹ Sadie, Stanley. *Mozart: The Early Years, 1756-1781*. (New York: Norton, 2006.) 102.

manner, with restless running notes. The fiercely dark and intense development section uses mostly first-theme material, treated contrapuntally. Dissonance, stress, and tension proliferate in this piece, with special concentration in the stormy development section. The recapitulation follows the regular format for sonata-allegro form, with the exception of what Stewart Gordon labels “an outburst” of diminished-seventh arpeggios just prior to the final closing section.³⁰

As if the sadness and grief associated with the death of his mother were not enough to bear, Mozart's father blamed him for causing her death. Frau Maria Anna Mozart died in July of 1778, while on her trip to Paris with Mozart. She fell ill in June, and through a series of written correspondences, Mozart's father urged him to seek medical care for his mother and arrange for her to be bled. Mozart was keeping himself busy by freelancing, composing, collaborating and looking for jobs while he left his mother at their lodging. Although her health was deteriorating progressively, she only alluded to her ailments in letters home to her husband. Mozart's father accused him of negligence, reproaching him in a letter saying, “You had your engagements, you were away all day, and as she didn't make a fuss, you treated her condition lightly. All this time her illness became more serious, in fact mortal—and only then was a doctor called in, when of course it was too late.”³¹

Mozart, grieving terribly after he witnessed his dear mother's death, reminded his audacious father, “You will easily conceive what I have had to bear—what courage and fortitude I have needed to endure calmly as things grew gradually and steadily worse...I have, indeed, suffered and wept enough,” and that at the time of his mother's death, “Indeed I wished at that moment to depart with her.” Conveniently, Leopold Mozart forgot that it was he who insisted

³⁰ Gordon, Stewart. *A History of Keyboard Literature: Music for the Piano and Its Forerunners*. (Belmont, CA: Schirmer, Thomson Learning, 1996. Print.) 130.

³¹ Solomon, Maynard. *Mozart: A Life*. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005.) 179-185.

that Frau Mozart travel with her son to Paris and thus delay her return home, it was he who ignored Frau Mozart's letters complaining of her maladies and sufferings, and it was he who haphazardly exhorted her to call for a doctor to be bled.³²

Certain of his son's guilt, he linked Frau Mozart's death with his son's birth: "The unbreakable chain of Divine Providence preserved your mother's life when you were born, though indeed she was in very great danger and though we almost thought that she was gone. But she was fated to sacrifice herself for her son in a different way."³³ By implicitly denouncing an infant for endangering his mother's life by the very act of emerging from the womb, his son is now, 22 years later, held accountable for her actual death. Such emotional havoc seems like an inspiring reason to compose a tumultuous yet exquisitely beautiful sonata in a minor key, unlike anything he had written to date.

The sonata-allegro second movement is gorgeous, stirring, expressive, and filled with deep feeling. Marked *Andante cantabile con espressione*, this music itself calls for a beautifully shaped, singing melody over a gentle, quiet accompaniment, and is a luminous reprieve from the brash *Allegro maestoso*. Likewise, the main texture of the exposition is a beautiful, long melody in the right hand with a light accompaniment in the left hand. The development hearkens back to the texture and character of the first movement as it becomes more motivic, with dissonant triplet figures in the right hand and forte trills in the left hand.

³² Solomon, *Mozart*, 185.

³³ *Ibid.*, 185.

Example 21. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Sonata in A minor, K. 310, II. *Andante cantabile con espressione*, m. 43-44.

The unsettling development parallels the circle-progression of suspensions in the development section of the first movement. Then after a gradual *calando* ending in *pianissimo*, the recapitulation begins and proceeds in the usual fashion, ending very serenely.

The third movement is exceptionally brief, lasting only about two and a half minutes when played at a true *Presto* tempo. It is a monothematic rondo in ABACABA form plus a coda. Yet, the constant, insistent eighth notes of the theme in 2/4 sound hurried and frantic. The opening theme gives a feeling of unrest, because of the constant motion and the strategic rests on the downbeat. The C section is in the parallel major, and is a bright relief from the frenzied, motivic preceding sections. Gordon writes that this movement possesses a “wild, distraught quality.”³⁴

³⁴ Gordon, *A History of Keyboard Literature*, 130.

Example 22. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Sonata in A minor, K. 310, III. *Presto*, m. 1-4.

In any case, it is still uncertain whether his mother's death and his father's hurtful accusations had anything to do with the composition of this marvelous sonata. The extreme contrasts in the music are indicative of emotions that Mozart may have been experiencing when he wrote it. The magnificently composed, heart-wrenching second movement could very well be a mournful tribute to the memory of his dear mother, while the first movement could be his musical-language way of responding to his father's wounding accusations.

Chapter 3: Improvisation and Ornamentation

Ornamentation

Another problematic performance aspect in Mozart's keyboard works is the symbols used for ornamentation. The most conscientious students can often misinterpret them, and this is understandable because even the authorities disagree on proper execution. I will examine two ornaments that are widely used in Mozart's piano works, the appoggiatura and the turn.

The term appoggiatura, or in German, the *Vorschlag* (plural *Vorschläge*), represents any single ornamental or non-harmonic pitch that precedes its principal note.³⁵ Occurrences of *Vorschläge* are denoted in the score by little notes, or *grace notes* in modern terminology. Whether these *Vorschläge* are to be executed on the beat or before the beat is ultimately up to the discretion of the performer, and it may not always be prudent to assume that all little notes in Mozart are to be struck on the beat. There are numerous instances of exceptions to the on-the-beat rule. Neumann writes, "many elements combine to emancipate Mozart's *Vorschläge* from the grip of the downbeat dogma as proclaimed by a few influential old theorists and perpetuated by many modern scholars."³⁶

The following are some examples of appoggiaturas that are to be struck on the beat. The clip below comes from the opening of the B-flat major sonata, K. 333. The anacrusic figure is to be played as four equal sixteenth notes.

³⁵ Neumann, Frederick. *Ornamentation and Improvisation in Mozart*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1986.) 6.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

Example 23. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Sonata in B-flat major, K. 333, I. *Allegro*, m. 1.

Next is the Rondo in D major, K. 485. There are appoggiaturas in the first and third measures of the theme that appear regularly throughout the rest of the piece. Paul Badura-Skoda asserts that they should be executed as a sixteenth note/dotted eighth note combination.³⁷

Example 24. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Rondo in D major, K. 485, m. 1-4.

Frederick Neumann postulates that whenever a *Vorschlag* precedes a written-out appoggiatura, it is reasonably safe to play it as a grace note, struck swiftly and lightly before the beat. He continues to define this “safe ground” as the following: if the appoggiatura character of the principal note is implied from the harmony; or if the *Vorschlag* precedes a triplet figure, even binary notes, staccato notes, or repeated notes.³⁸

³⁷ Ibid., 9.

³⁸ Ibid., 43-52.

Here is an example of the grace note preceding a triplet figure. This is from the opening rondo theme of the third movement of the D Major Sonata, K. 311. Grace notes are plentiful in this rondo theme.

Example 25. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Sonata in D major, K. 311, III. *Rondeau (allegro)*, m. 1-8.

The little notes in the anacrusis, measures 1-4, and the little notes that precede the quarter notes in measures 5-6 are to be played before the beat according to Neumann.³⁹ But the little notes that come before the eighth notes in measures 5-6 are to be executed as even sixteenth notes, as they are written in measure 7, also according to Neumann, among many other reputable pianists as evidenced in numerous recordings.⁴⁰ This is such because the little notes preceding the eighth notes in measures 5-6 are not part of the harmony, whereas the first of the group of

³⁹ Ibid., 46.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 42.

sixteenth notes in measure 7 most certainly are. In this case, they are written as little notes in measures 5-6 to avoid on-the-beat dissonances.

Next is an example of *Vorschläge* before groups of even binary notes. The following is an excerpt from the third movement of the G major piano concerto, K. 453. Especially in the lively tempo, a true “grace note” execution—quick and before the beat—gracefully (no pun intended) serves the melodic line without breaking up the flow with an accented non-harmonic tone. Neumann affirms that wrongfully utilizing a grace note in this scenario would be “obtrusive and clumsy.”⁴¹

Example 26. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in G Major, K. 453, III. *Allegretto*, m. 1-4.

Next is an example of Mozart's use of *Vorschläge* before staccato notes. The following is a passage from the third movement of his C major piano sonata, K. 279. Note the grace notes are displaced by an octave here. According to Neumann, the staccato principal note tells the executant to place the little note before the beat; but I think that just by listening and engaging one's instinctive musicianship tells the pianist that placing the little notes on the beat would sound unwieldy and displeasing.

⁴¹ Ibid., 47.

Example 27. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Sonata in C major, K. 279, III. *Allegro*, m. 124-130.

Finally, if grace notes come before repeated notes, Neumann believes that they need to be struck before the beat.⁴² An example of this instance can be found in the first movement of the B-flat major piano concerto, K. 595.

Example 28. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in B-flat major, K. 585, I. *Allegro*, m. 31-32.

I would be remiss if I did not address the grace note that opens the A minor sonata, K. 310.

Example 29. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Sonata in A minor, K. 310, I. *Allegro maestoso*, m. 1.

⁴² Ibid., 51.

Neumann contends that an on-the-beat treatment of this note would weaken the drive of the march rhythm throughout the piece, especially in the first measure. He suggests an *acciaccatura* or “crushed note” as an alternate option, but it is nearly unheard of to see an *acciaccatura* below the principal note, as they most always precede from above. An *acciaccatura* is the simultaneous striking of both the little note and the principal note, with a quick release of the dissonant note.⁴³

Adding validity to the assertion that ornaments must be addressed on a case-by-case basis, I would like to highlight two final examples of the *Vorschlag*. Consider these similar passages in the second movement of the A minor sonata, K. 310, and the first movement of the C major sonata, K. 279. Both examples are shown below.

Example 30. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Sonata in A minor, K. 310, II. *Andante cantabile con espressione*, m. 13.

⁴³ Ibid., 37.

Example 31. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Sonata in C major, K. 279. I. *Allegro*, m. 29

Both examples above contain *Vorschläge* preceding single notes. Specifically, these notes in both examples in the right hand outline supertonic harmonies and precede a cadential 6/4 chord. Analytical similarities aside, you'd think they should be played in the same manner. Yet, I believe that the little notes in the second movement of the A minor sonata are to be struck on the beat, while the little notes in the first movement of the C major sonata are to be placed before the beat. This is due largely in part to the respective tempo markings. Playing a snappy grace note before the beat in the slow movement would disturb the flow of the melodic line, and playing on-the-beat accented non-harmonic tones in a fast-moving broken arpeggio might make the listener lose his or her balance. These two examples indicate just how difficult it is to create definite rules for how to execute every ornament every time.

Another enigmatic symbol is that which represents the turn. A turn in Mozart's works consists of three scalar and stepwise ascending or descending notes that precede the principal note and include the upper and lower neighbor tones. The turn symbol either goes on the principal note as an "intensifying ornament," or in between two notes, serving as a "connective ornament," as Neumann calls them.⁴⁴ Of course, it is best to use artistic instinct to make a determination as to how it is most appropriate to execute turns on a case-by-case basis. I will just highlight a few contrasting exceptions to the three-note formula as I have found from my own experience.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 136.

First, I would like to point out the turns in the second movement of the A minor sonata, K. 310. There is a challenging series of turns in the second theme of this sonata-allegro form movement; they appear twice, a fifth apart. The following musical example shows how the passage appears in the score, a suggested execution beginning and ending on the principal note with three ornamental notes in between, thus creating five equally divided 64th notes, and finally an easier execution for less technically facile students, omitting the first principal note and beginning the turn on the upper auxiliary note.

Example 32. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Sonata in A minor, K. 310, II. *Andante cantabile con espressione*, m. 25.

A. as written

B. suggested execution

C. an easier version

Another piece I am discussing at length is the Rondo in A minor K. 511. It, too, contains copious embellishments, a few of which exist as exceptions to the rules. The first notes heard in the opening of the rondo theme are those of a turn, to be struck on the beat. The *siciliano* rhythm does not welcome before-the-beat executions of the turn in this case. It would sound jarring and out of place.

Example 33. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Rondo in A minor, K. 511, m. 1.

However, in the later major-key C section, there are double thirds separated by a turn of three little notes. Here, the little notes are to be played before the beat as to not muddy up the crispness of the parallel thirds. The dissonance created would prove unattractive to my ears. And furthermore, if Mozart intended for them to be struck on the beat, Neumann insists that he would have written a turn in double thirds as well, for the sake of consistency.⁴⁵

Example 34. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Rondo in A minor, K. 511, mm. 98-99.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 157.

Improvised Embellishments in Concertos

Mozart performed actively throughout his career, and it was through his performance of his own works which that he not only established the piano concerto as one of the most highly valued genres—the art form in which symphonic, chamber, and operatic styles converge—but also expanded and enhanced beyond precedent the emotional and expressive range of the piano concerto.⁴⁶ Piano concertos offer an occasion for the performer to showcase his or her own “personality,” perhaps more so than other solo keyboard works, due to the fact that there is much opportunity for embellishment of the melody by the addition of ornaments, as well as improvisation in cadenzas or lead-ins.⁴⁷

Formally, there exist two main components of study of the role of improvisation in Mozart's keyboard works. One is that Mozart's notation is sometimes fragmentary (hereafter, “shorthand”), and the performer needs to extrapolate how best to complete or fill in Mozart's shorthand notation. Maybe this was Mozart's practice due to time constraints to finish something in time for a performance, or simply because he was the intended performer of his own works and therefore just needed to give himself framework clues as to how to execute certain passages, while his tremendous talent for performing would take care of producing the florid filler on the spot.

The second component of study is that Mozart possessed a genius for improvisation, which often prompted him in a performance to elaborate upon a passage that was already adequate as written. In other words, even a “completed” passage may have inspired Mozart at his

⁴⁶ Landon, *The Mozart Companion*, 219-220.

⁴⁷ Grayson, David A. *Mozart, Piano Concertos No. 20 in D Minor, K. 466, and No. 21 in C Major, K. 467*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge UP, 1998.) 93.

own performance to flourish even beyond the confines of the score.⁴⁸ Therefore, it is acceptable for performers today to improvise embellishments in performances of Mozart's piano concertos, judiciously of course, and within reason. Pianist Carl Reinecke expressed his annoyance at over-embellished Mozart, calling the over-indulgent renditions banal, and full of "empty virtuosic grandiloquence" that "deforms more than ornaments."⁴⁹ Such flamboyance, although Mozart as a performer was no stranger to virtuosic challenges, should be strictly avoided in all circumstances.

Several treatises, musical sources, and personal letters from the period provide a wealth of evidence suggesting that Mozart and contemporaries routinely ornamented or embellished their performances of piano music. Their exact mode of ornamentation and embellishment—how they chose to decorate—remains elusive. Historians and pianists can surmise, however. Embellishment of the melody in a concerto is just another stylistic "duty" of the performer to contribute to the most historically accurate performance of a piece. The orchestral exposition features moments of thematic embellishment, so it is fitting that the solo piano would also follow suit. For example, in the C Major concerto, K. 467, the following two musical examples are from the orchestral exposition.

Example 35. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in C major, K. 467, I. *Allegro maestoso*, m. 5-6.

⁴⁸ Neumann, *Improvisation and Ornamentation*, 240.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 248.

And later; the same theme, embellished:

Example 36. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in C major, K. 467, I. *Allegro maestoso*, m. 9-10.

The little note and the sixteenth notes that follow it in the above example are executed as a triplet figure in numerous recordings of the concerto, and I believe that the soloist should play it in a like manner when the piano repeats these motives later in the movement.

The treatises in existence that are most closely relevant to this matter include Leopold Mozart's *Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing*, written in the year of younger Mozart's birth, chapter eleven of which is devoted to discussing "the tremolo, mordent, and other improvised embellishments." This surely served as great influence to Mozart the son. There were two other treatises written around the same time that are specifically dedicated to keyboard music and discuss the matters more extensively. They are Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, in which the second chapter discusses "Embellishments," and Daniel Gottlob Turk's *School of Clavier Playing*, the fifth chapter of which is entitled "Concerning Extemporaneous Ornamentation." Gottlob Turk's publication expounds upon what not to do when performing: apply a turn or trill to every other note. Rather, he offers a model to exemplify how to use the clues provided in the score to "follow the rules," so to speak.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Grayson, *Piano Concertos Nos. 20 and 21*, 95-96.

The following are several instances where it is fitting to add an improvised flourish. Each example will show both how the passage appears in the score, as well as my suggested execution of said flourish.

Example 37 shows the third movement of the C Major concerto, K. 467, right before the development, or C section. Note the two quarter notes nearly two octaves apart:

Example 37. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in C major, K. 467, III. *Allegro vivace assai*, m. 256-260.

Those two quarter notes seem a bit bare in my opinion, especially considering the rhythm, texture, and stepwise motion of the material that precedes and follows them. It seems as though these two quarter notes could have served as some type of shorthand notation to Mozart as he was performing. Here is how I like to fill in that measure:

Example 38. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in C major, K. 467, III. *Allegro vivace assai*, m. 256-260, suggested realization by J. Merlino.

The descending arpeggio connects the high D to middle E in a fluent fashion, and stays consistent with the rhythmic texture that pervades the movement. Even though dominant ninth chords are seldom heard in Mozart, I think one is implied by the outline of the melodic line on

the downbeats in the preceding three measures traveling up to a D over a sustained V7 chord in the left hand.

There exist abundant opportunities for decoration and embellishment in the E-flat major concerto, K. 482. This piece is one that he wrote for himself to perform. We know this because he did not provide cadenzas or lead-ins and because there are so many instances of “shorthand” notation in the score, probably because he only had to provide an outline for himself to extemporize during the concert. This is a perfect piece for any student who wishes to try his or her hand at composing or preparing improvised flourishes; the opportunities are numerous and the possibilities are endless. The piano part is rather sparse in terms of written-out embellishments. Many dotted quarter notes and dotted half notes appear to be used as shorthand for Mozart's implied ornate finger work. I will show just a few of these “shorthand” passages and some of my ideas for a suggested execution.

The first instance is in the first restatement of the rondo A theme. This occurs at measure 34. The piano plays a direct repeat of the theme over a pulsating string accompaniment. We have already heard the theme presented intact not only by the piano but also by the orchestra at this point, so I think it is in order to alter the melody just a bit, while not over-embellish. Here is the passage as it appears in the score, measures 34-41:

Example 39. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in E-flat major, K. 482, III. *Allegro*, m. 34-41.

And my idea for how to vary this iteration of the theme is as follows:

Example 40. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in E-flat major, K. 482, III. *Allegro*, m. 34-41, suggested realization by J. Merlino.

And when the theme comes back again at measures 182-189, it is printed in an identical fashion and invites more alteration, this time a bit more than in the previous instance. Here is my preferred execution for these measures:

Example 41. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in E-flat major, K. 482, III. *Allegro*, m. 182-189, suggested realization by J. Merlino.

Next, I will examine measures 164-173. This passage prepares the dominant near the end of the B section to flow back into the return of the A theme. The printed version in my Peter's Edition Urtext score is as follows. Notice the dotted half notes in extreme jumps away from each other. Surely this was Mozart's abbreviation or reminder, as he probably knew how he wanted to get from one end of the keyboard to the other.

Example 42. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in E-flat major, K. 482, III. *Allegro*, m. 164-173.

He is obviously just providing an outline for himself here. This “skeletal notation” serves merely as a memory aid.⁵¹ Note his use of the highest key on his piano (F6) twice in this passage. As a listener, I would really like to hear some dazzling up-and-down action in this passage. Here is one possible way that I might choose to play this passage. Within reason, the possibilities are endless here; of course, the player must take care not to be too over-indulgent and ostentatious in technical display.

Example 43. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in E-flat major, K. 482, III. *Allegro*, m. 164-173, suggested realization by J. Merlino.

Next is another realization of the same passage by Lili Kraus (1905-1986.)

⁵¹ Neumann, *Improvisation and Ornamentation*, 241.

Example 44. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in E-flat major, K. 482, III. *Allegro*, m. 164-172, suggested realization by L. Kraus.

The C section of this rondo is marked *Andantino cantabile* and is in the subdominant. It is practically a slow movement embedded inside a fast movement. The C section itself is in binary form plus a coda. Each of the A and B sections is presented first by the orchestra, then repeated by the piano. In the score, the iterations of both the A and the B sections in the piano part are exact repeats of the orchestra statements of those melodies. Therefore, it is fitting to embellish freely on the piano part's restatements, since they immediately follow unornamented versions of the same material. It is not only unnecessary but also stylistically inappropriate to double the orchestra in the solo piano part, especially on a repeat. Mozart most likely just wrote

that as filler for himself, knowing how he was going to decorate the passage when he performed this piece. Here is the unembellished “A” melody of the C section.

Example 45. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in E-flat major, K. 482, III. *Allegro*, m. 226-233.

And my suggestion for how to execute this melody:

Example 46. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in E-flat major, K. 482, III. *Allegro*, m. 226-233, suggested realization by J. Merlino.

There is cause to improvise more liberally here, because this passage is within the context of a slow and lyrical section. Furthermore, the *cantabile* marking solidifies this assessment. Florid improvisation in a slow, lyrical theme is reminiscent of the kind of embellishments a talented singer would incorporate into an operatic aria. What justifies such additions is the fact that there do not exist either shorthand notations or literal repetitions in works for other

instruments besides piano in Mozart—he wrote out the embellishments in full.⁵² Similarly, the “B” theme of the slow section of this rondo is free to be altered in a like manner. Here is the printed version:

Example 47. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in E-flat major, K. 482, III. *Allegro*, m. 242-253.

And here is Frederick Neumann's suggested execution as found in his very thorough and comprehensive resource, *Ornamentation and Improvisation in Mozart*.⁵³

Example 48. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in E-flat major, K. 482, III. *Allegro*, m. 242-253, suggested realization by Frederick Neumann.

⁵² Ibid., 244.

⁵³ Ibid., 245.

Later in the movement right before the final return of the A theme, there are two measures of a rocking sixteenth-note passage, followed by simple eighth notes in both hands. Perhaps Mozart he got tired of writing sixteenth notes and assumed that an eighth-note outline would be sufficiently self-explanatory. Here is how the passage appears in the score:

Example 49. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in E-flat major, K. 482, III. *Allegro*, m. 351-356.

And here is how the passage is presumably intended to be realized:

Example 50. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in E-flat major, K. 482, III. *Allegro*, m. 351-356, implied realization.

I think the eighth note “shorthand” in the printed score implies a broken-octave realization in both hands, rather than a continuation of the pattern found in the first two measures of this passage. This is for several reasons. First and foremost, there is a pedal tone E-flat in the lower voice of the left hand for the first two measures. The pedal tone is also present in the orchestra. The moving notes in the right hand create sixths when juxtaposed against the moving eighth notes in the upper voice in the left hand. These harmonies are doubled in sixths in the orchestra. If this rocking sixteenth-note figure were instead played as true broken octaves, the upper notes would all fall outside the range of Mozart's piano. Hence, the pedal tone in the upper broken sixteenth-note figure of the right hand doubles the E-flat pedal tone in the left hand. In

the third measure of this passage, the orchestral texture changes from a pedal point to a sequential passage of chordal-texture suspensions. There is no opportunity in a progression of suspensions for a constant pedal-tone note; therefore, a broken-octave realization is the most appropriate in this case.

Cadenzas

If Mozart provided a cadenza to one of his concertos, the chance of finding or composing something better is slim indeed. The performer can still show virtuosity and individuality of expression in playing Mozart's own cadenzas. However, if the composer did not provide a cadenza, it is up to the performer either to choose a cadenza either composed by someone else or to create one of his or her own, whether pre-composed or improvised on the spot. Providing an original cadenza shows a greater magnitude of creativity and individuality, and the level of virtuosity is chosen by the performer. It is important to keep reasonably within the "style" of Mozart; otherwise, too much of a contrast causes a creative dichotomy of sorts. As Grayson writes, "a cadenza that eschews the Mozartean model may introduce a stylistically foreign element to the work, thereby accentuating the sense in which the cadenza is a structural element supplementary to the form."⁵⁴

The following is a list of extant cadenzas composed by Mozart:

- K. 175: two versions for each of the first two movements
- K. 246: two for first movement, three for the second
- K. 271: two for each movement
- K. 365: first and third movements
- K. 413: first and second movements
- K. 414: all movements, two for second
- K. 415: all movements
- K. 449: first movement
- K. 450: first and third movements

⁵⁴ Grayson, *Piano Concertos Nos. 20 and 21*, 93.

- K. 451: first and third movements
- K. 453: two for first and second movements
- K. 456: two for first movement, one for third
- K. 459: first and third movements
- K. 488: first movement (written into the autograph- this is unusual)
- K. 595: first and third movements

The Bärenreiter edition of Mozart's cadenzas and lead-ins, compiled by Faye Ferguson and Wolfgang Rehm, is a complete source for every cadenza Mozart ever composed. The editors say in their preface to the edition that Mozart composed most of these primarily for his sister, Nannerl, to learn and play. Later in life, he began composing them for his pupils. The editors acknowledge that he composed them only for others to play, as he himself would have had no need for a written-out copy.⁵⁵

Leopold Godowsky (1870-1938), Polish virtuoso pianist and composer in his own right, composed many cadenzas for Mozart's piano concertos. These cadenzas perhaps fit the description by Ferguson and Rehm in the preface of the Bärenreiter Mozart cadenzas in which they assert that some of the cadenzas heard are too long and flashy, "excessive in length and content, overshadowing the work instead of crowning it."⁵⁶ Regardless of the glaring anachronism, they prove to be a fascinating spin on Mozart. His lavish cadenzas can best be described as a surprisingly satisfying blend of super-chromatic sentimentality, heightened romanticized emotion, and sweet Mozartiana. The melody is unmistakably Mozart's, but the romanticized harmonic language, the addition of countermelodies in the inner voices, the thick texture, and large chords are not at all characteristic of Mozart's writing. Therefore I would not recommend Godowsky's cadenzas for use in performing K. 488. Moreover, Mozart provided a supremely magnificent cadenza directly in the score and one should tread very carefully if

⁵⁵ Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. *Cadenzas and Lead-ins to the Piano Concertos*. Ed. Faye Ferguson and Wolfgang Rehm. (Bärenreiter Urtext edition. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015.) ix.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, vii.

contemplating choosing anything else. Nevertheless, Godowsky's *schmaltzy* offering is certainly worthy of a listen and a play-through, if for no other reason than to see if you can detect how many snippets of Mozart's melodies he manages to work in (hint: it is a staggering number of snippets).

The following is an excerpt from his cadenza for the first movement of Mozart's A major concerto, K. 488.

Example 51. Leopold Godowsky, Cadenza for Piano Concerto in A Major, K. 488 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, I. *Allegro*, m. 25-32.

Each individual voice is “Mozartean” in its own character, to a point, but when layered on top of one another as such, compounded with the tritone-away key signature, it becomes an

amalgamation of romantic-style chromaticism and therefore no longer in the style of Mozart.

There is such rich chromaticism in this eight-measure passage that is very uncharacteristic of Mozart's own writing. Furthermore, Mozart's piano only went down to F1 by modern standards, so the inclusion of Eb1 is blatantly anachronistic. The eight-bar excerpt above is just a snapshot of the entire cadenza, spanning 72 measures in length, and running the gamut of tonal areas. Godowsky's use of layers, voices upon voices, intricate rhythms, large bombastic chords, sumptuous pedal markings—not to mention the adventurous chromaticism—renders his cadenza, albeit creative, complex, and satisfying to play through and analyze, wholly unusable in the context of the concerto in any even slightly historically-informed performance setting.

In comparison, esteemed Mozart specialist Lili Kraus composed cadenzas which are well-suited for historically-informed performance within the context of concertos. In the foreword to her edition of Mozart's original cadenzas as well as a compilation of her own, she writes about the burden of the performing artist:

“His responsibility, then, is heavy enough. He is bent on projecting to the listener the message he has received through the symbols of the text; he tries to transport his audience into the magical world which he creates by fusing his own spirit with that of the composer. Yearning to gain insight into the heart of the matter, he hopes that the truth revealed to him will be incontestable, answering every prerequisite to conjure up a world at once personal and, by the power of truth, irresistible.”⁵⁷

I find her tone here to be humble, and upon reading the rest of her eloquent foreword, readers can sense her deep appreciation and love of Mozart and utmost respect for his compositions. Her contributions to the repertoire of cadenzas for Mozart concertos are a perfect fit, stylistically speaking. Her cadenzas include more “Mozartean” figuration and harmonic progressions. She also takes passages from the concerto and adds her own embellishments. I will include some noteworthy passages from her cadenzas.

⁵⁷ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Original Cadenzas for the Piano*, ed. Lili Kraus (USA: Belwin Mills Publishing Corp., 1972.)

Example 52. Lili Kraus, Cadenza for Piano Concerto in C Major, K. 467 by Wolfgang Amadeus

Mozart, I. *Allegro maestoso*, m. 1-5.

Here you can see in measures 3-4, the range of this passage falls out of the bounds of Mozart's piano, which only went up to an F6 by modern standards. Despite this anachronism, I still find the figuration to be in accord with what precedes it in the concerto, and an appropriate display of virtuosity to put the finishing touch the piece. Next is a passage from the end of the same cadenza, which basically uses Mozart's like passage in the concerto, but varies the figuration slightly while still maintaining the style and character.

Example 53. Lili Kraus, Cadenza for Piano Concerto in C Major, K. 467 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, I. *Allegro maestoso*, m. 39-41.

Mozart's own cadenza for the A Major concerto, K. 488 is rather modest in comparison to his others, especially when heard to “crown” the very beautiful and sparkling movement it follows. Perhaps pianists should use this one as a guide, as to not get carried away with showing off. Only a humble 29 measures long, it's arguably the least virtuosic of all his cadenzas, save for one measure of sextuplet sixteenth-note runs in the left hand. It does not take wild harmonic adventures; there is a brief foray into the parallel minor, including one bar of the submediant, but it swiftly returns to the dominant where it stays until the conclusion of the cadenza. Here is an excerpt depicting the aforementioned venture into the submediant of the parallel minor and its return to the dominant:

Example 54. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piano Concerto in A major, K. 488. I. *Allegro*, m. 308-318.

Note Mozart's abundant use of silence! Perhaps other ambitious composers can take a lesson from Mozart's inclusion of rests and not be too over zealous in the inclusion and exploitation of notes. Also worthy of heed is the rather stationary left-hand, serving only to anchor the harmonies while the right hand embellishes with arpeggios. The rhythmic complexity of the right hand arpeggios suggests an improvisatory style, not an exact execution of the sixteenth-note versus thirty-second-note values; rather, the gist implies fitting all the notes written in the same amount of time without obscuring the meter.

This idea also occurs in the B-flat major sonata, K. 333. The third movement is astonishingly concerto-like, in rondo form, with the addition of written-out lead-ins and a completely written-out, full-fledged cadenza. The cadenza is appropriately scaled-down to reflect its context within a sonata movement. In any case, this brilliantly dazzling, flashy showpiece

“prophesies” Mozart’s grandest piano concertos, according to Neal Zaslaw.⁵⁸ In the final measure of the cadenza, leading up to the last iteration of the A theme, there is a passage of groups of four descending sixteenth notes, turning to eighth notes, and turning finally to quarter notes. I think the execution of this decrease in note value should be gradual, smooth, and proportional. In other words, the player should gradually slow down of the speed of notes, as opposed to employing a clear delineation of new note values. It is not marked as a *ritardando*, but I think one is certainly implied in this case. Here is the measure to which I am referring:

Example 55. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Sonata in B-flat major, K. 333, III. *Allegretto grazioso*, m. 197.

Mozart was known to have improvised prolifically and fluently. Even as a child, Mozart dazzled the masses as an astonishingly proficient improviser. A prelude he wrote as a child recalls baroque fashion and convention of blocked chords to allow improvised figurations. This piece is reminiscent of a harpsichord suite by J. S. Bach or some contemporary. Young Mozart’s audiences were awed by his facility at improvisation, and this Praeludium in G Major, K. 15 probably provided him the opportunity to divulge his imaginative gifts to his audiences.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Zaslaw, Neal. *Mozart's Piano Concertos: Text, Contexts, Interpretation*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1996.) 313.

⁵⁹ Maxwell, Carolyn, Charles Schadle, and Geraldine Gant Luethi. *Mozart Solo Piano Literature, A Comprehensive Guide: Annotated and Evaluated with Thematics*. (Boulder, CO: Maxwell Music Education, 1987.)

Example 56. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Praeludium in G Major, K. 15, m. 1-5.

Mozart did not compose any cadenzas from his nineteenth concerto (F major, K. 459) until his twenty-third concerto (A major, K. 488). Concertos 20-22 are fair game, so to speak, for making up and using your own. I wouldn't call myself a composer, but I do enjoy improvising and arranging music. The opportunity to create my own original cadenzas for Mozart's concertos 21 and 22 appealed to my creativity and interest in improvisation. Utilizing clues from Mozart's own cadenzas as a model, and studying others' renditions of cadenzas for Mozart's concertos (in part to learn what not to do), I have written some cadenzas that I deem to be historically informed. I would like to submit my cadenza for his twenty-first concerto in C Major, K. 467, first movement. In the following example, you can see it is similar to Mozart's style, with some paraphrasing of the score with some embellishment, as well as Mozartean figuration and harmonic progressions.

Example 57. Josiane Merlino, Cadenza for Piano Concerto in C Major, K. 467 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, I. *Allegro maestoso*.

The musical score is written for piano in 4/4 time, C major. It consists of six systems of two staves each. The first system shows the right hand with a series of arpeggiated chords and eighth-note patterns, while the left hand plays a simple harmonic accompaniment of quarter notes. The second system continues the right hand's arpeggiated figures, with the left hand adding eighth-note patterns. The third system features a more complex right hand line with sixteenth-note runs and a left hand with a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The fourth system shows the right hand with a series of chords and eighth notes, and the left hand with a continuous eighth-note pattern. The fifth system includes triplets in both hands, with the right hand playing a descending line and the left hand a more active eighth-note pattern. The sixth system concludes with rapid sixteenth-note passages in both hands, ending with a final chord in the right hand.

The image displays a page of musical notation, likely a manuscript or printed score, featuring seven systems of grand staves (treble and bass clefs). The notation is complex, involving various musical symbols, including notes, rests, accidentals, and dynamic markings. The first system shows a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a more rhythmic accompaniment. The second system continues the melodic development in the treble and adds more intricate patterns in the bass. The third system features a more active bass line with frequent sixteenth-note runs. The fourth system shows a continuation of the melodic and harmonic themes. The fifth system includes a large, sustained chord in the treble and a more active bass line. The sixth system features a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a more rhythmic accompaniment. The seventh system shows a continuation of the melodic and harmonic themes. The notation is written in a clear, professional style, typical of a musical score.

The image displays a musical score for a keyboard instrument, consisting of six systems of staves. Each system typically contains two staves (treble and bass clef), with some systems having a third staff (bass clef) for a lower register. The music is written in a historical style, featuring complex melodic lines with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and a steady bass line. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings like 'f' (forte) and 'p' (piano). The final system ends with a wavy line indicating a continuation or a specific performance instruction.

First lead-in for the third movement:

Example 58. Josiane Merlino, Lead-in 1 for Piano Concerto in C Major, K. 467 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, III. *Allegro vivace assai*.

The musical score for Example 58 is written for piano in 2/4 time. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a treble staff with a trill on the first note, followed by a series of eighth notes and a half note, and a bass staff with a half note and a half rest. The second system has a treble staff with a series of eighth notes and a half note, and a bass staff with a half note and a half rest.

Second lead-in for the third movement:

Example 59. Josiane Merlino, Lead-in 2 for Piano Concerto in C Major, K. 467 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, III. *Allegro vivace assai*.

The musical score for Example 59 is written for piano in 2/4 time. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a treble staff with a series of eighth notes and a half note, and a bass staff with a half note and a half rest. The second system has a treble staff with a series of eighth notes and a half note, and a bass staff with a half note and a half rest.

The following is a possible cadenza for the third movement of the concerto:

Example 60. Josiane Merlino, Cadenza for Piano Concerto in C Major, K. 467 by Wolfgang

Amadeus Mozart, III. *Allegro vivace assai*.

The musical score is written for piano in C major, 2/4 time. It consists of five systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system begins with a treble staff containing eighth-note patterns and a bass staff with a whole rest followed by a melodic line. The second system continues the eighth-note patterns in the treble and features a more active bass line. The third system shows a change in the treble staff's texture, with more complex sixteenth-note figures, while the bass staff remains active. The fourth system features a treble staff with a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, and a bass staff with a melodic line and some sustained chords. The fifth system concludes with a treble staff of sixteenth-note runs and a bass staff of sustained chords, ending with a final cadence.

The image displays a musical score for a keyboard instrument, organized into five systems, each consisting of a grand staff (treble and bass clefs joined by a brace). The notation is as follows:

- System 1:** The right hand plays a continuous eighth-note melody with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes.
- System 2:** The right hand continues the eighth-note melody. The left hand features a series of chords, with a prominent trill in the third measure.
- System 3:** The right hand's melody continues. The left hand has a trill in the first measure, followed by rests for the remainder of the system.
- System 4:** The right hand plays a series of eighth-note chords. The left hand remains silent (rests) throughout this system.
- System 5:** The right hand begins with a trill, followed by a series of eighth-note chords. The left hand has a trill in the first measure, followed by rests, and then a final chord in the last measure.

Dynamic markings include *p* (piano) at the beginning of the first system and *f* (forte) at the beginning of the fifth system. The score concludes with a final chord in the right hand.

Conclusion

Research into the stylistic context and the composer's biography can be a helpful and enjoyable prelude before studying any piece of music. As I hope my discussion has conveyed, understanding of technical considerations as well as historical context can shape the performer's interpretation of a piece, as evidenced by my discussion of many pieces, but in particular: Sonata in A minor, K. 310; Rondo in A minor, K. 511; Concerto in C major, K. 467; and Concerto in E-flat major, K. 482.

As my analyses demonstrate, Mozart's music deserves meticulous examination and research in order to gain a thorough appreciation of every nuance. Moreover, becoming familiar with the composer's life proves helpful in forming one's interpretation of a piece. A successful, aesthetically pleasing, and historically accurate performance of Mozart's music for keyboard is contingent upon careful assessment of technical demands and life events, as well as adequate understanding of performance practice.

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