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MOZART

Concerto for 2 Pianos, KV 365

Concerto for 3 Pianos, KV 242

Piano Concerto
in D minor, KV 466

Daniel Barenboim

András Schiff

Sir Georg Solti

English Chamber Orchestra

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)

Concerto for Two Pianos in E flat major, KV 365

1	I	Allegro	9:46
2	II	Andante	7'07
3	III	Rondeaux: Allegro	6'37

Daniel Barenboim, piano
Sir Georg Solti, piano
English Chamber Orchestra

Concerto for Three Pianos in F major, KV 242

4	I	Allegro	8'14
5	II	Adagio	7'55
6	III	Rondeau : Tempo di menuetto	5'42

András Schiff, piano
Daniel Barenboim, piano
Sir Georg Solti, piano
English Chamber Orchestra

Piano Concerto in D minor, KV 466

7	I	Allegro	14'49
8	II	Romanza	9'35
9	III	Rondo: Allegro assai	8'00

English Chamber Orchestra
directed from the keyboard by
Sir Georg Solti

Total timing: 78'16

Mozart, like most composers of his era, seldom began writing music without having an idea of who was going to play it, once the work was completed, or without the *quid pro quo* financial support of a particular patron in mind. Sometimes the anticipated performer and the patron were one and the same. Such was the case with the Concerto in F [No. 7] for Three Pianos, KV 242. The Countess Maria Antonia Lodron of Salzburg asked Mozart to write a concerto that she could perform with her daughters, Aloisa and Josepha (who also was known as 'Giuseppa' and 'Giuseppina', Italianized versions of her given name). Maria Antonia and Aloisa apparently were eminently capable players; Giuseppina was somewhat less proficient. The puzzle for Mozart was how to write an artistically satisfying work that challenged his patroness and her daughters without embarrassing them. (Then, as now, the motto 'Never make your boss look bad' applied.)

In the so-called 'Lodron' Concerto, completed in February 1776, Mozart succeeded by giving all three soloists a chance to carry the melodies, passing them back and forth like shuttlecocks at a badminton match. Giuseppina's part is clearly less challenging, and, in this form, the concerto allows individuals of even modest pianistic talent to appear on the concert stage with more illustrious colleagues. (In the recent past, for example, even a German head of state and the wife of a former Australian prime minister made a novelty appearance in KV 242.) Mozart cunningly

'busies' the solo parts to fool the listener into believing that the music is more technically challenging than it really is. Later, Mozart reworked this three-piano concerto into a version for two pianos, and performed it with his sister Nannerl in Salzburg in 1780.

Music historians are unsure when Mozart's Concerto in E flat [No. 10] for Two Pianos, KV 365 (316a) was written. Most place it in early 1779, although there is evidence – for example, from the type of manuscript paper used – to suggest that it dates from a few years earlier. In any event, this is a work probably intended at the outset for performance by Mozart and Nannerl. They had performed two-piano works together since childhood, and so it was only a matter of time before Mozart composed a large-scale work of his own for two pianos.

Later, Mozart performed this concerto (and possibly also the two-piano version of KV 242) with a Viennese pupil by the name of Josepha Barbara Auernhammer. She was only two years his junior. While he granted that her pianism was 'enchanting', he wrote to his father in July 1781 to tell him that Josepha's physical appearance was anything but: she was 'a holy fright'. The poor young woman! A month later, Mozart complained that Josepha had fallen in love with him, and that she was telling her acquaintances that they were to be married. Mozart's temporary vexation – his

language in these letters is unusually harsh – did not prevent him from performing KV 365 with her in November 1781, and again in May 1782.

In his book *Mozart: A Cultural Biography*, Robert W. Gutman uses words such as 'joyous rivalry', 'amiable bantering', and 'rollicking athleticism' to describe the Concerto for Two Pianos. 'The heart of KV 365,' he writes, 'lies in the spirited interplay between the soloists: their good-humored repartee carries all before them as they spar and reconcile.' In contrast to KV 242, in KV 365, the pianists are equal partners. With this concerto, Mozart showed that he held his sister's musical talents, both technical and interpretive, in no small esteem.

If the Concerto for Three Pianos makes modest demands on its soloists, none but an accomplished pianist can successfully perform the Concerto in D minor [No. 20], KV 466. In other words, amateurs need not apply. As if to prove the point, this concerto was premiered by none other than the composer himself – a pattern which was to remain in effect through KV 595, the last of Mozart's great piano concertos.

The date of KV 466's first performance was February 11, 1785. Characteristically, completion of the new concerto was a last minute affair for Mozart; he entered it into his catalogue of completed works only the day before. On the day of the premiere, in freezing weather, Leopold

Mozart arrived at his son's residence in Vienna to find him and a copyist feverishly preparing the orchestral parts. (Mozart was quite mistrustful of copyists and preferred not to let them out of his sight – not for fear that they would make errors, as much as in suspicion that they would surreptitiously copy out the music in an attempt to profit from it, by way of unauthorized editions.) The upshot was that the members of the orchestra probably had to sight-read most or all of their music at the premiere.

Writing to Nannerl, who had remained in Salzburg, Leopold expressed his admiration not just for the music itself, but for the performance of the orchestra, given the challenging conditions. This was a subscription concert, the first in a series of six. There were more than 150 patrons, who had paid a gold sovereign or three ducats to attend, whereas Mozart paid only half a sovereign for use of the hall. Obviously it was reassuring – and good for business – to have a list of financially committed patrons and a dependable income stream.

Alas, good fortune is seldom infinite: within a few years, deep pockets among the Viennese aristocracy became shallower, and many of them left the city entirely. In 1787, Empress Catherine of Russia entered into an ill-advised conflict with the Turks, and Austria's Emperor Joseph II allowed himself to be pulled into it as well. The resulting war tax cut into the disposable incomes of the Viennese aristocracy.

There were other factors as well. On the opposite side of the empire, there was rebellion in the Netherlands. There was trouble in Poland and Hungary too. Perhaps more than any other event, however, the French Revolution and circumstances leading up to it had a dramatic impact on life in Vienna in the late 1780s. Many Viennese were pleased by the challenges to the French monarchy, but Marie Antoinette was Joseph II's sister, after all, and he could hardly countenance such challenges to her authority and her royal person – and, by extension, to his own.

As a result, Viennese society became more repressive. Censorship was stepped up, societies such as the Freemasons (of which Mozart was a member) were suppressed, and citizens could be jailed without a trial. Also, it is possible that Mozart's late piano concertos were simply over the heads of his subscribers. At any rate, although he lived until December 1791, Mozart completed only one concerto in the last four years of his life, whereas he completed a dozen – including KV 466 – in the four years immediately prior. Demand simply had dried up.

Until the following concerto [KV 467] became all the rage in the 1960s – a consequence of its use in the film *Elvira Madigan* – KV 466 was Mozart's most popular piano concerto. Its key of D minor links it to the ominous sound-world of *Don Giovanni*, which Mozart was to compose to years

later. (Erik Smith refers to this concerto's 'daemonic vitality'.) Mozart supplied his own cadenzas for the first and third movements, but these have not been handed down to us. Many pianists, in keeping with the Classical tradition, create their own. Others use cadenzas written by none other than Ludwig van Beethoven, who played this concerto as a young man. Brahms did the same.

Some commentators, particularly those in the 1800s, have been bothered by the fact that this emotionally intense piano concerto – only the first of two that he was to write in a minor key – comes to a relatively happy (or is that manic?) close in the sunny key of D major. Today's listeners are more willing to accept emotional ambiguity, however. Furthermore, it was a Classical convention that even a moody piece of music should be provided with a brilliant 'happy ending' in most cases. Indeed, Don Giovanni ends not with the dissolute nobleman's agonized descent to hell, but with the remaining principals philosophically getting on with their lives.

Raymond Tuttle

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