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THE CONCERT ARIAS
OF WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION:

THE CONCERT ARIA AS AN ART FORM

An examination of the corpus of solo vocal literature composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart leads one to the conclusion that the professional singer of the classical era was not as interested in the smaller, more intimate forms of musical expression, as were the lieder singers of the romantic era. Mozart composed some significant lieder, but this medium had not yet attained the total artistic unity of vocal line and accompaniment that it was to achieve in the hands of Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and their successors.

The singers of Mozart's day commissioned concert arias. These lengthy pieces suited their needs because the concert aria stood alone as a dramatic entity better than an aria excerpted from an opera. It also gave more opportunity for technical display than other vocal compositions of the time.

The actual concert aria was written for a concert performance without the usual trappings of the operatic stage, but the text might be taken from an existing opera libretto. However, there are other arias now categorized

as concert arias which were not originally intended for concert performance. At this time most operas were composed for a specific performance and with the talents of particular singers in mind. Therefore, at subsequent performances of these operas when a new singer was hired, he might request that one or more of his arias be recomposed specifically for his voice and abilities. Mozart composed such pieces for later performances of his own operas and also to be inserted in the operas of other composers. In the latter case, Mozart's insertions have generally outlasted the works for which they were composed. Those arias written for later performances of Mozart's own operas have in many cases remained as a permanent part of the original and, as such, will not come under discussion in this paper. Mozart also wrote some concert works for two or more voices, but only those for solo voice will be considered here.

At its best the concert aria can be said to be a sort of a "concerto in miniature in which the voice replace[s] the solo instrument."¹ However, the monumental aria developed first in the works of Stradella and Alessandro Scarlatti so that it actually predates the solo concerto. During these early days of the development of the concert aria the singer seems to have been considered one of the supreme executive artists along with the

¹Alfred Einstein, Mozart: His Character, His Work (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), p. 357.

violinist. Some of the instrumental competition suffered from limitations in this regard. The harpsichord, for example, lacked sustaining power; the large organ was confined to the church; and the small organ was extremely limited in both volume and variety of sound. Although the trumpet had advanced technique, it had an imperfect scale. Since the singer was an extremely important musician during the classical era, a study of the concert aria which he demanded becomes important to a complete understanding of the music of the time.

Throughout the baroque era the concert aria developed as a natural adjunct of opera seria. The characteristics of the libretti of these operas lent themselves most readily to the monumental character of the arias and to their stylized emotions expressed in a restrained fashion. As might be expected, the most immediate influence on the early arias of the child Mozart was his meeting with Johann Christian Bach in London. The older composer made a great impression on Mozart and influenced him in almost all forms of composition.

It is almost impossible to give a formal outline which will apply to all concert arias. Naturally, the form varied with the dramatic situation being portrayed. Many of the arias consist of an extended dramatic recitative followed by an elaborate aria. Sometimes the aria is da capo in form, but Mozart soon began to chafe under the restrictions of the old opera seria form. Often he

composed a lyrical section followed by a vigorous closing allegro, a precursor of the cavatina/cabaletta formula brought to a peak in the bel canto school.

It will be the purpose of this paper to provide as extensive information as possible on all of Mozart's concert arias. Heretofore some arias have received no mention in sources in English and only very sketchy treatment in foreign languages. A study of the arias should reveal an interesting picture of Mozart's artistic development. He wrote the first aria when he was nine years old and the last in the year of his death. The arias will be treated chronologically so that the composer's development may be more clearly seen. Arias which were left incomplete for one reason or another will be considered as to their evidence of Mozart's development but will not otherwise be covered in any detail. First, each aria will be discussed in relation to its historical background. Then the text and its author will be given consideration. The development of his techniques of instrumentation will also be noted.

One does not have to make a detailed study of Mozart's vocal works to discern that he loved writing for the voice and was expert in the art of dramatic expression. Most of Mozart's concert arias are infrequently performed, but many of them deserve more frequent hearing.

CHAPTER II

COMPOSITIONS OF THE CHILD

(1765-66)

In 1765 during his stay in London the nine-year-old Mozart was invited to participate in the creation of a pasticcio, which was a popular form of entertainment at that time. The task of setting an opera libretto to music was divided between several composers. The libretto to be set was Metastasio's Ezio; Mozart's part in the joint compositional effort was to set the aria of Massimo, who has attempted the murder of Caesar but has failed. Suspicion for the attempt falls on Ezio, who is the beloved of Fulvia, Massimo's daughter. Fulvia is angered by the intrigues of her father, and in the aria set by Mozart, "Va dal furor portata," K. 21 (19c), he rages at his daughter.

The child-composer was not able to plumb the depths of an outraged father's emotions, but this is relatively unimportant. The very young Mozart could follow the conventions of opera seria and compose a bravura aria in da capo form. It is true that an examination of the original manuscripts of these early arias shows that it is virtually impossible to tell how much was added by Leopold,

Wolfgang's father. However, Mozart's development was steady throughout these early works. Leopold's additions were undoubtedly those of a teacher and an editor.

The bravura techniques in this aria consist primarily of some wide leaps in the vocal line; there are only three measures of relatively easy coloratura singing. The shift of character from the "A" to the "B" section is abrupt. One is accustomed to hearing the dominant key in the "B" section, but Mozart uses the subdominant. It seems that this unexpected key heightens the feeling of menace, thereby depicting the threatening father. Mozart's proportions between the "A" and "B" sections of a da capo aria, however, remained in later arias just as they are in this one. The "B" section is extremely short--only eighteen measures as compared to eighty-nine measures in the "A" section. As has been stated, the opera seria was a dying form, and the da capo aria was to disappear with it.

Although the instrumentation, which calls for two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, and strings, is not unusual, Mozart already shows skills beyond his years in the handling of these instruments. Wyzewa and Saint-Foix have noted the liberty which marks the instrumentation of the oboes and bassoons.²

²Téodor Wyzewa and Georges de Saint-Foix, W. -A. Mozart: sa vie musicale et son oeuvre de l'enfance à la pleine maturité, 5 vols. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer et Cie, 1936), 1:131.

One fact that makes this aria so amazing is that it is the first known vocal work written by Mozart. Because of his age, this aria falls within the category of juvenilia, but Mozart was already a better composer than most others would be at full maturity.

After remaining in England for more than a year, the Mozarts travelled to The Hague. In March of 1766, Prince William V came of age, and Wolfgang appeared in several commemorative concerts. For Prince William's sister, Caroline, Mozart composed the aria "Conservati fedele," K. 23. The text is from Metastasio's Artaserse. Mandane is speaking to her son Arbace, who is preparing to leave. She speaks of her melancholy feeling and exhorts her son to be faithful to her.³ Otto Jahn writes that this aria "consists of a pleasant, flowing melody,"⁴ and certainly one does see evidence here of that melodic gift that would so enrich the singer's repertoire. Princess Caroline would have needed only modest technique to perform the narrow range (e^1-g^2) of this comparatively simple melody. She would, however, have had ample opportunities to show her abilities for expressive singing. There would have been an opportunity for an interpolated *cadenza* at measure 79. The accompaniment is also simple and is scored for strings only. To heighten the expressive

³Einstein, p. 358.

⁴Life of Mozart, trans. Pauline D. Townsend, 3 vols. (London: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1882), 1:44.

quality, Mozart shifts from the dominant major to the dominant minor twice between measures 20 and 45. This alternation of mode is somewhat progressive for the time and especially for one so young. The brief "B" section of this da capo aria is in the parallel minor key. This aria cannot be considered an important work in Mozart's canon, but it does show definite progress in expression and melodic writing over the previous aria.

When Mozart returned home to Salzburg, he was honored with another commission. On December 21, 1766, just a little more than a month before the composer's eleventh birthday, the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, Sigismund von Schrattenbach, was celebrating the anniversary of his coronation. To mark the occasion, he attended the opera. The work to be performed was Il cavaliere di spirito, whose composer and librettist are unknown. It was the custom at such events to perform a licenza aria either before or after the opera. The licenza was wholly unrelated to the opera of the evening but simply paid homage to the honored person present. Mozart was given the privilege of composing the licenza for this occasion. The author of the chosen text is unknown, and it is just as well, since this kind of work rarely if ever adds to a poet's reputation.

The composer's task was also thankless, but composers often have to work with inferior texts. Mozart composed a long recitative, "Or che il dover m'astringe," with a da capo aria, "Tali e cotanti sono," K. 36 (33i). The

setting of this recitative, the first in the concert arias, is somewhat square and lacks the flexibility that Mozart would soon achieve. Surely the tone of this work is suitable for the formality of the occasion. Indeed, the opening theme of the aria carries a certain nobility which is appropriate. Once again one finds a greatly shortened "B" section in the da capo form--only twenty measures, as compared to ninety-five in the "A" section.

In keeping with the festive occasion, Mozart introduces trumpets into the orchestra, which otherwise consisted of strings, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, two trombones, and timpani. Trombones were not a part of the symphony at this time, but they must have been used in the opera of the evening, so Wolfgang decided to take advantage of their presence.⁵ The construction of this aria shows that the young Mozart had improved in one year's time. The sections fit together much more smoothly, and the melodies manifest a great deal more grace and style.

A study of the autograph of this aria shows many corrections but apparently no additions by Leopold. Just a month prior to the composition of this aria the archbishop had confined Wolfgang for a week to prove that he was the composer and not his father. Sigismund probably thought that Leopold was exaggerating about his son's talents and was doing some of the composing himself.

⁵Jean Massin and Bridgitte Massin, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (Paris: Fayard, 1970), p. 608.

Wolfgang was made to write the music for the first part of "Die Schuldigkeit des ersten und fürnehmsten Gebotes," K. 35. (The second and third parts were given to Michael Haydn, who was the music director of the Salzburg court.) Eric Blom notes that "the music . . . showed astonishing sureness of workmanship, if little originality of invention."⁶ The autograph also reveals something about Mozart's method of composition at this time. He composed the voice part first with the bass; then he added the instruments.⁷

In the late 1960's, Wolfgang Plath discovered an autograph for a soprano aria, "Cara, se le mie pene" (KV⁶: deest).⁸ This is also a licenza aria, but the author is unknown. The text concerns parting and separation and was evidently intended for some private circle.⁹ The piece was left undated, but it is obviously a very early work. It shows compositional weaknesses which are not in

⁶Eric Blom, Mozart (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 40.

⁷Stefan Kunze, "Zum vorliegende Band," Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke in Verbindung mit den Mozartstädten Augsburg, Salzburg, und Wien herausgegeben von der Internationalen Stiftung Mozarteum Salzburg, Serie II: Bühnenerwerke, Werkgruppe 7: Arien, Szenen, Ensembles und Chöre mit Orchester, 4 vols. (Kassel and Basel: Bärenreiter, 1967), 1:xii.

⁸This designation was given to the aria by the publishers of the complete works of Mozart to indicate that it did not appear in the sixth edition of the Köchel catalogue, which was published in 1965.

⁹Kunze, 1:xiii.

evidence in any of the arias thus far discussed. Whether this indicates that Wolfgang was at an earlier stage of development, in a hurry, or merely without the advice of his father is impossible to determine. The most obvious flaw is the lack of unity between the "A" and "B" sections. The meter changes from $\frac{4}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{8}$. The "A" section's main key is C major, while the "B" section begins in F major and modulates to A minor. With the return to the "A" section we are abruptly back in C major. Some musical ideas are expressed and then not developed, such as the syncopation between the violin and viola in measure 39 and the vocal coloratura in measures 48 and 49. The other instances of vocal coloratura in the piece are somewhat contrived and meaningless, as in measures 29 through 31 and 59 and 60. Stefan Kunze supposes this aria to have been composed around 1765. If it was composed before K. 21 (19c), then Mozart's progress is evident.¹⁰

After K. 36 (33i) Mozart's composition of concert arias seems to have ceased until 1769. However, it is supposed that some arias were composed which are no longer extant; indeed, some are mentioned in the letters of Wolfgang and his father. These early works already discussed would in the canon of a lesser composer be considered juvenilia. Because of the extraordinary quality of Mozart's genius, however, they are already beyond that category. They are immature in relation to what the

¹⁰1:x.

composer would achieve in his brief life, and they are the work of a child--a brilliant child.

CHAPTER III

COMPOSITIONS OF THE YOUTH

(1769-75)

At the beginning of 1769, the Mozart family returned to Salzburg from Vienna. They were disappointed, and with good reason. The Emperor Joseph II had suggested that an opera by the twelve-year-old Mozart would be interesting, and thus Wolfgang had composed La finta semplice for this promise of a performance in the capital. However, the intrigues and machinations of the other composers in the city finally prevented the performance of the opera. Financially the trip to Vienna had been a failure, so Leopold returned to Salzburg, where he knew he could draw his salary for service to the Archbishop. But the Archbishop proved even more helpful at this point; he ordered a performance of Wolfgang's new opera to celebrate his birthday. It was for this occasion that Mozart composed the licenza "A Berenice e Vologeso," K. 70 (61c). The recitative connected with the aria is from an opera called Vologeso, which had been set by Sarti and Jomelli. The text of the opera was probably written by a local Salzburg poet. It speaks of "the rosy dawn of this day and of the

happiness and peace that it brings with it."¹¹ Mozart sets the text of the recitative with more flexibility than K. 36 (33i) while still maintaining the dignity which befits a licenza aria. This is the last time that there is a complete repeat of the da capo in Mozart's works. More and more the composer develops a system which Wyzewa and Saint-Foix call demi da capo.¹² The practice had actually been inaugurated by Jommelli and Piccinni. It is not known for which singer this aria is composed, but it could have been performed by the same soprano who sang the role of Rosina in the opera, since the vocal styles are very similar. This aria contains more florid writing than any aria previously discussed. The tessitura reaches d³, but, in spite of that difficulty, the writing is on the whole vocally successful. There are two measures in which the line takes an unexpected turn (m. 100 and m. 106). These the singer would have to plan carefully. The very brief "B" section is in the subdominant key and in $\frac{3}{8}$ meter as contrasted to the $\frac{4}{4}$ of the "A" section.

The scoring of the aria is not unusual: two violins, viola, bass, two oboes, and two horns. There is a characteristic touch in the violin part which illustrates Mozart's interest in wide-ranging melodies and octave displacement. The first instance occurs in measures 15 through 22. The

¹¹Trans. Otto von Irmer, "Sylvia Geszty: Mozart-Konzertarien" (Hamburg: Telefunken-Decca Schallplatten, n. d.), record jacket.

¹²1:258.

line repeatedly jumps up and down a two-octave span. This aria could be considered somewhat empty in its display, but sung by a soprano with a good command of the florid style, it could result in an exciting performance.

The young Mozart had not yet visited Italy. Such a trip was a necessity for anyone who hoped to achieve success as a composer. All of the great ones had visited this fountainhead of the arts. Besides, Wolfgang was now thirteen; if he were to reap any further benefit from his billing as a prodigy, it would have to be soon. Therefore, in December of 1769, Leopold and his son left for a tour of Italy. Mozart's next concert aria was probably begun at the end of 1769 or at the beginning of 1770 for this first Italian journey. It is a forty-eight-measure fragment which breaks off in mid-phrase, "Ah, piu tremar von voglio," K. 71. This aria appears without recitative with a text from Metastasio's Demofonte. There are no explanations for the incompleteness of the aria. Mozart was always a very practical composer; one may suppose that because there was no immediate prospect for a performance, he laid it aside.

An orchestral introduction of thirty measures points to the fact that this was to be an aria of grand proportions. The opening theme for the tenor is also a bold declaration. Here the instrumentation calls for two oboes, two horns, and strings--true chamber style. A valid evaluation of this aria is impossible; there simply is not

enough of it. Because it is incomplete, it will not receive further consideration.

In a letter written to his wife from Milan on February 3, 1770, Leopold mentions that his son was composing two Latin motets for two castrati, ages fifteen and sixteen. The boys had asked Mozart to write something for them, and he could not refuse because they were friends who sang beautifully.¹³ It is conjectured that one of these motets is the recitative and aria "Ergo interest, an quis"-- "Quaere superna," K. 143 (73a). This is a sacred work, but it is included in this discussion because it differs little in form and content from an operatic aria. It begins with a seven-measure recitative accompanied by continuo. The aria is an andante da capo form with a beautiful melody and has some moderately difficult bravura passages. The accompaniment includes only strings and organ; this simplicity would be an advantage for one who is arranging a chamber performance. It is unfortunate that the other motet did not survive.

In Milan the Mozarts were assisted by the Governor-General of Lombardy, Count Carl Joseph von Firmian, who was the younger brother of a former Archbishop of Salzburg. He instigated a musical party at which four of Mozart's concert arias were performed. These pieces were supposedly written in February or March of 1770 to prove to the Italians that

¹³The Letters of Mozart and His Family, ed. Emily Anderson, 2 vols. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), 1:161.

Wolfgang could write an opera seria and to secure a commission for the young composer. Count Firmian helped Mozart get the commission, and Mozart wrote Mitridate, Re di Ponto, K. 87, for the next opera season in Milan. All four of these test arias are for soprano. The first of them, "Per pieta, bell'idol mio," K. 78 (73b), is a brief aria of only seventy-seven measures. The melody is a cantilena of some beauty even though it does not possess the profound quality Mozart would later develop. The melody is embellished with several moderately difficult bravura passages, although the range only extends to a². The text is from Act I, Scene v of Artaserse by Metastasio, but Mozart set only the first strophe of the aria and repeated it three times, the second time in the dominant key. In this aria Artaserse asks his loved one not to say that he is ungrateful and states that he is unhappy and unfortunate. The instrumentation calls for two oboes, two horns, and strings, and the orchestration is simple. Sometimes the first oboe plays a duet in thirds with the soloist.

The second of these practice arias stands in direct contrast to the first. It contains the most extensive use of fioratura made by Mozart in a concert aria at this point in his career. The text of this aria, "Fra cento affanni," K. 88 (73c), is also taken from Artaserse, but this time it is from Scene 2 of the first act. In this aria Arbace sings of despair, horror, fear, and pain,

which calls forth the flood of coloratura. The reader will notice that the sex of the persona often has no relationship to the voice assigned the role. These matters were obscured in opera seria anyway by the use of castrati, but in the concert aria it seems that almost any text could be assigned to a soprano. This aria is definitely for the advanced singer: the range extends to c^3 , and the fioratura is formidable. The instrumentation calls for two oboes, two horns, two trumpets, and strings, but the orchestra is completely subservient to the voice in this aria. Einstein points out that for the first time in this aria Mozart does not repeat the entire "A" section but only the second half of it.¹⁴ This is another step removed from the traditional da capo aria in form.

"O temerario Arbace," K. 79 (73d), begins with a recitative, one that is much briefer than that of most concert arias. The aria itself then begins with no instrumental introduction. As in K. 78 (73b), this is a simple, flowing melody, embellished with bravura passages, but here they are somewhat more extensive and a little more difficult than in the former aria. The text of this aria is also from Artaserse (Act II, Scene xi). It is actually a scene for two people. Five measures of recitative are given to Artabano, the father of Arbace, who sings the rest of the recitative and aria. For ease of performance

¹⁴p. 358.

it would probably be best for one person to sing the entire work. Arbace has been accused of the murder of the king, but he does not try to prove his innocence so as to protect his father, who is guilty. In a scene of despair and remorse he begs Artabano to remember him and to comfort his beloved.

This aria cannot be called da capo. There is an instrumental interlude (mm. 68-78) followed by a repetition of the same text set to a variation on the same melody. Then at measure 102 there is a return to the original form of the melody. This same formal design is found in Mitridate.¹⁵

The last of the four arias composed for the party in Milan, "Misero me!"--"Misero pargoletto," K. 77 (73e), is the only one with a text from one of Metastasio's libretti other than Artaserse. This text is from Act III, Scenes iv and v of Demofonte. Timante, who is the supposed son of King Demofonte, has discovered that Dircea, his secret bride, is also the daughter of the King and therefore his sister. The recitative is a great monologue of despair, and in the aria he speaks to his wife, his child, and his father.¹⁶

This is Mozart's first great dramatic accompagnato recitative. It is very elaborate, and its forcible character is greatly enhanced by the orchestra. In the aria

¹⁵Wyzewa and Saint-Foix, 1:289.

¹⁶Kunze, 1:xiv.

Mozart repeats only the second part of the "A" section; there are no bravura passages, and there is no change of key. The "A" section is marked adagio, and the "B" un poco allegro. This must be acknowledged as one of the most successful arias Mozart produced up until this time. In the first place, the handling of the orchestra (two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, and strings) shows an advancement for the young composer. Throughout the recitative and aria he uses swift changes of dynamics with telling effect. Even though the aria contains no bravura passages, the line carries a grandeur and nobility which Mozart would capitalize on in the future. It has been pointed out by Eric Blom that all four of these Milanese arias show the influence of Hasse and Piccinni, whom Mozart had just met.¹⁷ This ability to absorb the various techniques manifested by the many musicians whom young Wolfgang met as he travelled undoubtedly contributed greatly to his rapid artistic development. If indeed these four arias by the fourteen-year-old composer were performed together at the home of Count Firmian in Milan, they could not have failed to make a great impression on the assembled company.

On April 21, 1770, Mozart wrote to his sister from Rome that he was working on an aria; then, on April 25, he wrote that the aria was finished. It is conjectured that

¹⁷P. 51.

this aria was "Se ardire, e speranza," K. 82 (73o), for soprano. The text once again is from Metastasio's Demofonte, Act I, Scene xiii. Death hangs over Dircea, Timante's wife. Timante ponders her rescue with Matusio, Dircea's supposed father, and is overcome with pain. The aria is without recitative and begins with a twenty-two-measure orchestral introduction. The orchestration (two flutes, two horns, and strings) is remarkable only in an occasional very high position for the cellos.¹⁸ The aria is marked andante, and except for some characteristic wide leaps has no real bravura passages. The "B" section is only nineteen measures long and in the dominant key. It is also in triple meter, as opposed to the duple of the "A" section. Instead of using a repeat sign for the return of "A," Mozart writes out a shorter version with a great deal of variation in the melody.

Mozart wrote another aria while in Rome, probably at about the same time as the preceding one and possibly for the same occasion. "Se tutti i mali miei," K. 83 (73p), is for soprano and is also from Demofonte (Act II, Scene vi). At last the soprano takes the role of a female character: Dircea attempts to awaken the emotions of the despairing Timante and move him to stand by her. The orchestra is busy throughout this aria, but except for the fifteen-measure introduction, it never leaves its role as accompanying body. Once again this is the kind of da capo

¹⁸Kunze, 1:xiv.

aria that repeats only the second part of the "A" section. The piece was originally much longer; the manuscript shows three large cuts which were probably made to please the singer who was to perform the aria. The brief second part has one passage that points up the young Mozart's progressive tendencies. In measures 112 and 113, the composer effects a modulation using the Italian sixth chord as the pivot and enharmonic pitches in the melody. Throughout the aria the declamation is excellent. The singer is asked to perform some very difficult bravura passages, including sixteenth-note passages, staccati on high pitches, and wide leaps.

Wolfgang and his father returned to Milan late in 1770, and on December 20, Mitridate, Re di Ponto had a successful premiere. Mozart's next concert aria was probably written shortly thereafter, early in 1771. He did return to Milan late in 1771, but the style of the aria is similar to the style of Mitridate and therefore seems to argue for the earlier date. The score states that it was written for the theater in Pavia, which is near Milan. The text of this aria, "Non curo l'affetto," K. 74b, is once again from Metastasio's Demofonte. In Act I, Scene vii, Creusa calls on her brother to avenge her honor; she was supposed to have married Timante. Mozart gives the soprano a large amount of difficult coloratura to help her vent her rage. Psychologically this aria somewhat misses the point, but it is still a very

exciting piece when successfully performed. Mozart also uses the "Scotch snap" in the accompaniment and the vocal line to add to the unsettled feeling. The "A" section of this da capo aria is seventy-three measures long but, illustrative of just how short a demi da capo can be, only the last twenty measures are repeated.

Mozart had now proved his abilities sufficiently to have received commissions for full operas. Einstein implies that all of the arias between K. 70 and K. 74b were practice pieces for the young composer.¹⁹ With the exception of "Misero me!"--"Misero pargoletto," K. 77 (73e), they are more in the style of the operatic aria than the concert aria. These works are interesting primarily because of the youth of their composer, who was fifteen in 1771. From our vantage point, however, their interest is also enhanced by the knowledge of what their composer would become.

¹⁹P. 358.

CHAPTER IV

COMPOSITIONS FROM THE FINAL YEARS IN SALZBURG

(1776-81)

Mozart wrote no concert arias for four years. During this time most of his early dramatic works were produced. The next arias were created by a nineteen-year-old composer with considerably more experience and maturity. In 1775, a travelling opera group was performing in Salzburg, its impresario S. Emirio.²⁰ There are a few arias which could have been composed as insertions in the operas of other composers for the members of this group.

The first of these arias, "Si mostra la sorte," K. 209, is for tenor. The melody of this aria looks forward to those graceful tunes Mozart would write for tenor in his later operas. It has not been determined into which opera this aria was inserted, but the text was written by Pietrosellini in L'astratto, ovvero Il giocatore fortunato. This libretto had been set by Piccinni, so the aria might have been inserted into his opera.²¹ We are told that it was sung by a tenorino di

²⁰Erich Schenk, Mozart and His Times (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), p. 164.

²¹Otto Schneider and Anton Algotzy, Mozart-Handbuch:

garbo, or a "charming little tenor," a stock character in the commedia dell'arte. This fact and the light quality of the aria itself indicate that the aria was at least inserted in an opera buffa. The tenor sings the praises of boldness in love. The melody of the "A" section is rewarding and graceful, but the "B" section in the dominant key is somewhat stilted. Mozart writes out the repeat so that he may write out his own variations. The accompaniment is deftly handled, employing three against two with the vocal part.

There is also a fragment of an aria for bass which was probably written in 1775 for someone from the same troupe of singers. "Un dente quasto e gelato," K. 209a, is only sixteen measures long and is scored for horn and strings. For all of its brevity, it does show good buffo spirit in text setting and an interesting use of chromatics.

"Con ossequio, con rispetto," K. 210, also takes its text from the Pietrosellini libretto. This tenor aria similarly owes much to the commedia dell'arte. The persona is a young lover who flatters his rival to his face and makes rude remarks aside. The dramatic situation dictates a freer form than the traditional da capo. The tempo is allegro assai throughout, and the voice is often in parlando style. This aria must have become known in Italy because there is a scene in Rossini's Il barbiere

Chronik-Werk-Bibliographie (Vienna: Verlag Brüder Hollinek, 1962), p. 144.

di Siviglia which apparently borrows from the basic ideas of Mozart's aria. One can hear this striking similarity by comparing the opening of the aria with the beginning of Act I, Scene ii of the opera. Even the dramatic situations of the two pieces are similar.

The autograph of "Voi avete un cor fedele," K. 217, is dated October 26, 1775. The text is from Carlo Goldoni's Le nozze di Dorina (Act I, Scene iv). The text has been somewhat modified. In Goldoni's libretto Dorina speaks to two suitors and mistrusts both; in Mozart's text there is only one suitor. Baldassare Galuppi's setting of the Goldoni libretto had been performed locally, so Mozart's aria was probably an insertion at one of these performances.

This is the first of Mozart's rondo arias. The form of the work is best analyzed as follows: A B A' B' A" C. Each repetition of "A," which is a beautiful lyrical melody, is more abbreviated than the last. The other sections are allegros with moderately difficult coloratura writing used to heighten the dramatic effect. Dorina is a chambermaid, and the aria is in the soubrette style.

Mozart continued his development of the vocal rondo. "Ombra felice," K. 255, is the composer's only concert aria for alto, and it was written for Francesco Fortini, the castrato of a travelling opera troupe under the direction of Pietro Rosa. This aria seems to be the first to be intended only for concert performance rather than for

insertion in an opera. Here we see the influence of Johann Christian Bach on Mozart. J. C. Bach had also set this text as a concert aria. Mozart even used the main theme of the Bach aria in a slightly altered form.²² The text is from Didone abbandonata, an opera composed by Michele Mortellari, a pupil of Piccinni. Metastasio had written a libretto called Didone abbandonata, but the text of this aria was apparently not part of it.

This aria begins with a recitative which is not really long when compared to others Mozart composed, but is very expressive. It depicts the leave-taking of a disconsolate lover. In the aria his hesitation and irresolution are effectively portrayed by the change of movement in the sections of the rondo. This work uses figured bass, which would indicate the presence of a harpsichord with the orchestra, still the usual arrangement in opera seria. Mozart achieves an interesting effect at the end of the aria by having the orchestra end piano rather than the usual forte. This aria calls for expressive singing but is otherwise not exceedingly difficult. A modern performance would, of course, call for a contralto; the aria reaches only to d¹, but it descends to g. Mozart was only twenty when he wrote this aria in September of 1776, but he shows great depth of feeling and great mastery of compositional techniques. He writes

²²Kunze, 1:viii.

Italian opera as though he were Italian, and soon his genius would transcend national boundaries in his own dramatic masterworks.

"Clarice cara mia sposa," K. 256, was written in September of 1776 and is thought to have been intended for the same Piccinni opera as K. 209 and K. 210. This work was to be sung by the tenor Palmini. Capitano Faccenda, in an absolute torrent of words, tells all the virtues his future wife, Clarice, must possess, while Clarice's father, Don Timoteo, makes feeble attempts to stop the endless flow of words. Once again these are stock characters from the commedia dell'arte, and this patter aria can be compared to those of such characters as Osmin in Die Entführung aus dem Serail or Bartolo in Le nozze di Figaro.

The aria, which is without recitative, has a most interesting tempo marking at the beginning: In tempo comodo d'un gran ciarlone--"In the easy tempo of a great chatterbox." Because of the torrent of words and the fast tempo, the orchestra maintains a simple accompaniment. The only times the tempo relaxes are during the three brief interjections of Don Timoteo; these are in recitative and are hardly long enough to give the performer a chance to breathe. In a modern concert performance these brief interjections could easily be sung or spoken by an accompanist. This approach would, in fact, serve to heighten the comic effect. The tenor melody, if one should

choose to call it that, consists primarily of one note. Those who are looking for the profound Mozart must look elsewhere, but here one can find the young composer with wit, a sense of humor, and unparalleled ability to express the comic.

In August of 1777, Mozart wrote the first of the arias composed for Josefa Duschek (or Dušek), the wife of Franz Duschek, the noted pianist and successful composer who lived in Prague. The text of "Ah, lo previdi"-- "Ah, t'invola agl'occhi miei," K. 272, is from Andromeda, composed by Giovanni Paisiello. The librettist is not known for certain, but it is conjectured that he was V. A. Signi-Santi.²³ This lengthy piece takes on the proportions of a "scene." The opening recitative is brief and moves without pause into an extended allegro section. Eventually the allegro dissolves into another recitative, which is followed by a lyrical cavatina. The work closes with a seventeen-measure allegro section.

This aria contains some of Mozart's most dramatic music. According to Einstein, "Mozart almost never wrote anything more ambitious, or containing stronger dramatic feeling than this aria."²⁴ The persona of the scene is

²³Ludwig Ritter von Köchel, Chronologisch-thematisches Verzeichnis sämtlicher Tonwerke Wolfgang Amadé Mozarts nebst Angabe der verlorengegangenen, angefangenen, von fremder Hand bearbeiteten, zweifelhaften und unterschobenen Kompositionen, 7th ed. (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1965), p. 285.

²⁴p. 362.

Andromeda. Her lover is dying, and thus she too wishes to die. The many tempo changes in the recitative help to depict the kaleidoscope of her emotions. It is interesting that although the composer did not use coloratura in this aria, it is still quite demanding, since it sustains a rather high tessitura.

One cannot deny the dramatic and compositional craftsmanship which Mozart exhibits here, and yet the aria does not seem to function as well as some others as a concert piece. Its success cannot depend solely on the performer's vocal prowess, but she must also possess a great variety of dramatic colorations. The scene is approximately fourteen-and-a-half minutes long, and the various sections will seem even longer if the delivery is devoid of drama. Mozart showed his own awareness of this fact early in 1778, when Aloysia Weber was working on the same aria. He advised her "to watch the expression marks--to think carefully of the meaning and force of the work--to put [herself] in all seriousness in Andromeda's position!--and to imagine that [she] really [is] that person."²⁵ It is possible that this letter is one of the sources of the theory that Aloysia had admirable technique but not much depth of feeling in her singing. If so, the accusation may very well be unjust. These are excellent instructions for any singer undertaking this aria.

²⁵Quoted by Paul Hamburger, "The Concert Arias," in The Mozart Companion, ed. H. C. Robbins Landon and Donald Mitchell (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1956), p. 335.

Mozart was much enamored of Aloysia. He started to write an aria for the tenor Anton Raaff, but it seemed too high, so K. 294, "Alcandro, lo confesso"--"Non so d'onde viene," became the first of the arias written for Aloysia. It did not seem to matter that the text made sense only when sung by a man. In this aria, taken from Metastasio's Olimpiade, King Clisthenes sings of his strange feeling of sympathy for an unknown man who is in reality his own son, whom he has thought long dead.

This was not Mozart's first contact with this text, nor would it be his last. Fourteen years earlier in London he heard an aria on the same text by J. C. Bach. After writing K. 294, Wolfgang wrote the following in a letter to his father:

For practice I have also set to music the aria "Non so d'ionde viene," etc. which has been so beautifully composed by Bach. Just because I know Bach's setting so well and like it so much, and because it is always ringing in my ears, I wished to try and see whether in spite of all this I could not write an aria totally unlike his. And, indeed, mine does not resemble his in the very least.²⁶

Although the external structure of the young composer's rendition closely follows that of Bach, Mozart was already able to instill more life into his compositions than his mentor.

The recitative which precedes the aria is relatively brief but quite expressive. The aria is three-part without being da capo in form. The opening, marked andante

²⁶p. 362.

sostenuto, is lyrical with two difficult coloratura passages. This is followed by a declamatory section marked allegro agitato, then a return to the tempo primo. The coloratura which closes the aria is fiendishly difficult, ascending to e^{b3}. (Aloysia was only fifteen years old.) Almost all of the arias written for Aloysia maintain a tessitura which is cruelly high for most sopranos. However, this aria contains many passages that call for great depth of expression as well as those that demand technical agility.

The composer Mozart was the singer's dream. When he was writing "Se al labbro mio non credi," K. 295, for Anton Raaff, he wrote to his father, "I like an aria to fit a singer as perfectly as a well-made suit of clothes."²⁷ Raaff was almost sixty-four years old, but his abilities were still highly recognized. He was yet destined to create the role of Idomeneo. Mozart seemed eager to have one of his arias sung by the old gentleman. He chose to set a portion of Hasse's Artaserse which Raaff had already sung. However, this text was not originally a part of the libretto of Artaserse or the earlier opera, Arminio, in which Hasse had also used it; the author of the text is therefore unknown. On February 7, 1778, Mozart was in Mannheim and took this da capo aria to Raaff. He was pleased with it, especially with the "B" section. Actually Mozart had composed that section in a manner which was a

²⁷
1:497.

little old-fashioned, somewhat like what Hasse might have done, hoping that it would please Raaff.²⁸ The singer, however, asked Mozart to shorten the aria because he was no longer able to sustain his notes. The autograph shows the signs of the cuts which Mozart made; the first "A" section is 117 measures long; the second, only 51. Raaff must have been rejuvenated in the next two years, however, because he was at that time able to sing the taxing role of Idomeneo. "Se al labbro" is written within the range of a twelfth. The "A" section is a lyrical adagio with the instruments giving perfect support to the voice. At the age of twenty-two, Mozart was prepared to write within whatever framework necessary. This aria is one of Mozart's masterpieces in the genre.

The text of Mozart's next aria was chosen by the person for whom it was written. Dorothea Wendling, a soprano who was also the wife of the flutist in the Mannheim court orchestra, chose the text "Basta, vincesti"-- "Ah non lasciarmi, no, bell'idol mio," K. 486a (295a), the lament from Metastasio's Didone abbandonata. If we were to make an assessment of the singer's abilities by the difficulties presented in this aria, we would have to conclude that her talents were not particularly remarkable. It is not a coloratura setting, and the range and tessitura are not at all extreme. This does not mean, however, that the aria is not worthy of performance. The

²⁸Einstein, p. 365.

emotions in the aria demand sensitivity from the singer. The piece is preceded by a thirteen-measure recitative. The eight lines of the text of the aria are set in a continuous fashion; then there are four measures of recitative and an intensified repetition of the main theme.

The infatuation between Mozart and Aloysia Weber was not to continue, but the ensuing relationship was to produce some of the composer's most remarkable concert arias. In January of 1779, just a few weeks after his break with Aloysia, Mozart finished what he considered the best concert aria he had composed up to that time, "Popoli di Tessaglia"--"Io non chiedo, eterni Dei," K. 316 (300b).²⁹ Unfortunately, one hears few performances of this aria. The tessitura is extremely high, and the range extends to g^3 . Otto Jahn points out that the recitative is probably the most important section of the composition and that Mozart never wrote a better one.³⁰ The text of the aria is from the Alceste libretto which Calzabigi had written for Gluck. The lovely, expressive cavatina seems to bear a kinship with Donna Anna's "Non mi dir" from Don Giovanni. Einstein alone dislikes the coloratura display.³¹ However, this coloratura does not have to be empty display. The rest of the aria and the recitative are filled with highly expressive writing, and there is no reason that a good dramatic artist possessing the range

²⁹Kunze, 2:xvi.

³⁰2:81.

³¹Einstein, p. 366.

for the piece could not produce an exciting performance. This piece certainly must be ranked as one of Mozart's best efforts in the genre.

All of Mozart's difficult soprano arias were not written for Aloysia Weber. There seem to have been a good number of sopranos with prodigious talents ready to grant commissions to Mozart. "Ma, che vi fece, o stelle"-- "Sperai vicino il lido," K. 368, was commissioned by Elisabeth Wendling, who had sung the part of Elettra in Mozart's recently composed Idomeneo, Re di Creta, K. 366. She was also the daughter of Dorothea Wendling, for whom K. 486 (295a) had been written. "Ma, che vi fece, o stelle" would also have to be ranked as one of the most difficult among the bravura arias. Einstein judges the coloratura to be better motivated in this aria than in "Popoli di Tessaglia"--"Io non chiedo, eterni Dei," K. 316 (300b).³² The highest note is f³. Mozart uses a far-ranging modulation in measures 109 through 127 to help depict the changeableness of fate; the tonality changes from E^b major to A major. The text is taken from Metastasio's Demofonte; Dircea sings of her misery since her lover's father is opposed to their marriage.

At this time Mozart was still in Munich, where Idomeneo had received its first performance. In March of 1781, he wrote an aria to please the Countess Paumgarten, who at that time was the favorite of the Elector, Karl

³²Ibid.

Theodor. This aria, "Misera, dove son!"--"Ah! non son io che parlo," K. 369, is one of the most popular of Mozart's soprano arias, perhaps because it is reasonable in its vocal demands, since it was not written for one of the composer's friends who was a bravura specialist. The text is from Metastasio's Ezio; Fulvia is grieving for her lost husband and implores the gods to smite her with a thunderbolt. Mozart has come to maturity in his ability to grasp a dramatic situation fully and express it in musical terms. Otto Jahn observes that "the recitative and air are both earnest and serious, and require in every respect an excellent delivery."³³ It is interesting to note that this soprano aria was performed by the tenor Adamberger at a concert on March 23, 1783.³⁴

Mozart returned home to Salzburg from his triumphs in Munich early in March of 1781. Immediately he was reminded of his servitude to the Archbishop by being ordered to Vienna so that his employer could put him on display there. This was to be a turning point in Mozart's life. He was only twenty-five years old, and he was longing for freedom and stability. The former would be his in a few short weeks, but the latter would elude him for the remaining ten years of his brief life.

³³2:169.

³⁴3:1257.

CHAPTER V

COMPOSITIONS OF MATURITY IN VIENNA

(1782-83)

In Vienna Mozart's already troubled relationship with Archbishop Colloredo became even worse: he was not allowed to appear independently. Eventually this led to the composer's resignation. Before the separation, however, Mozart was called upon to write an aria for the Salzburg soprano castrato Francesco Ceccarelli. "A questo seno deh vieni"--"Or che il cielo a me ti rende," K. 374, was performed by Ceccarelli on April 8, 1781, and according to the composer, an enthusiastic audience demanded that it be repeated.³⁵ The text comes from a libretto by Giovanni de Gamerra, Sismano nel Mogol, which had been composed by Paisiello in 1773. The persona of the aria is Zeira. She sings of her joy and thankfulness after her beloved Siface tells her of his victory over Sismano. It is evident from an examination of the aria that Ceccarelli's was not much more than an average talent for singing. There are no coloratura passages, and the voice part has a moderate compass. The line is expressive throughout, however, although the emotions seem a bit shallow when compared to

³⁵Kunze, 2:xviii.

those evoked by some of Mozart's other works. It is an ingratiating aria, worthy of performance.

"Der liebe himmlisches Gefühl," K. 119 (382h), is, according to Jahn, "a bravura song in the old style, of undoubted early Italian origin."³⁶ However, Saint-Foix believes it to have been written about 1782 because its style is fairly consistent with that of Die Entführung aus dem Serail, K. 384.³⁷ The orchestral parts have been lost, and only a piano reduction is extant. The bravura passages are not as difficult as those in the arias written for Aloysia Weber Lange.³⁸

The next aria which Mozart wrote manifests a change in his style. Indeed, because of its simplicity, it could almost be called a song if it were not for the orchestral accompaniment the composer fashioned for it. "Nehmt meinen Dank," K. 383, was written for Aloysia. If it were true that she could not move her audience except with agility and coloratura technique, she surely must not have been pleased with this piece. Expressive singing is the only attribute to be displayed here. The two strophes by an unknown poet are set simply with expressive solo writing for flute, oboe, and bassoon. The strings play pizzicato throughout, a technique not often used by Mozart. The aria

³⁶ 2:235.

³⁷ Saint-Foix, quoted by John N. Burk, Mozart and His Music (New York: Random House, 1959), p. 238.

³⁸ Kunze, 3:x.

was probably written for Aloysia to sing at a benefit performance in April of 1782 as a licenza in which she bade farewell to her patron before leaving. Mozart used the theme again in the quartet in the second act of Die Entführung aus dem Serail.

Mozart's next aria was also written for Aloysia, who was now his sister-in-law, since he had recently married her younger sister, Constanze. The text of "Mia speranza adorata!"--"Ah non sai qual pena sia," K. 416, is taken from Zemira, an opera composed by Pasquale Anfossi. The libretto is by Abbate Gaetano Sertor. However, this aria was not written to be an insertion in Anfossi's opera. In that work this is a castrato role, so Madame Lange could not have sung it onstage. As with most of Aloysia's arias, this one calls for considerable coloratura agility; the range extends to f³. However, the ultimate success of this aria does not depend on bravura as much as it does on sympathetic delivery. The time of parting between loved ones is effectively painted here by Mozart. The rondo form of the aria with its tempo changes adequately depicts the changing emotions. These tempo changes are even begun in the expressive recitative which precedes the aria. Although, as previously mentioned, some works on Mozart deduce that Aloysia Weber Lange was strong in the execution of difficult bravura passages but only moderately skilled in expressive singing,³⁹ it is evident from an examination

³⁹Hamburger, p. 326; Jahn, 2:83.

of her arias that her bravura technique was incredible. But it does not seem possible to prove her shallowness solely on the strength of the music Mozart composed for her.

In January or February of 1783, Mozart began a tenor aria, "Müsst ich auch durch tausend Drachen," K. 435 (416b), which was intended either as an insertion in a German Singspiel or as a part of a German opera he was contemplating. At any rate, it is unfinished. The bold melody is complete, but the orchestration is merely sketched in intermittently. It calls for a rather large orchestra, certainly larger than would have been available for concert performance.

"Männer suchen stets zu naschen," K. 433 (416c), is a broadly burlesque song for bass. Aside from its orchestral accompaniment, there is little reason to call this piece an aria. It does seem to be a forerunner of the music written for Papageno in Die Zauberflöte. Its date of composition is uncertain, but it could have been intended for the same work or performance as the fragment K. 435 (416b). K. 433 was also left unfinished, but completed editions do exist. This aria is certainly not without merit as a comic vehicle for a baritone and could be performed even by the less experienced singer.

The next four arias which Mozart composed all have texts taken from Il curioso indiscreto, which was composed by Pasquale Anfossi. The librettist of the opera is unknown.

"Ah, spiegarti, oh Dio," K. 178 (417e), exists with piano accompaniment only, and very little is known about it. It is generally believed that this aria for soprano was connected to the same project that produced the other three arias, but it is not possible to be sure in what capacity. Possibly it was either a study for K. 418 or even a substitute for it. It is a simple andante throughout with a range extending to c^{#3}, so it is not nearly as difficult as K. 418.

Pasquale Anfossi (1727-1797) was a student of Piccinni and Sacchini. During his lifetime he composed more than seventy operas, which were very popular at the time, and he was considered as important as Galuppi, Piccinni, Paisiello, and Cimarosa. However, his operas "were of too light a structure to last even into the [nineteenth] century."⁴⁰ One of his most popular operas, Il curioso indiscreto, received its premiere in 1777. In June of 1783, it was to receive its first performance in Vienna by an Italian troupe but with Mozart's sister-in-law, Aloysia, as Clorinda and the tenor Valentin Adamberger as the Count. To insure the success of his Austrian compatriots, Mozart composed substitute arias--two for Aloysia and one for Adamberger. Lest his enemies say that he wished to improve on Anfossi's opera, Mozart had the following

⁴⁰ Alfred Loewenberg, "Pasquale Anfossi," in Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 5th ed., ed. Eric Blom (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1954), 1:156.

notice printed in the libretto:

The two arias on p. 36 and p. 102 have been set to music by Signor Maestro Mozart to suit Signora Lange, as the arias of Signor Maestro Anfossi were not written for her voice, but for another singer. It is necessary that this should be pointed out so that honor may be given to whom it is due and so that the reputation and the name of the most famous Neapolitan may not suffer in any way whatsoever.⁴¹

With characteristic lack of humility, Mozart wrote as follows to his father on July 2:

Anfossi's opera Il curioso indiscreto, in which Madame Lange and Adamberger appeared for the first time, had its first performance the day before yesterday, Monday. It failed completely, with the exception of my two arias, the second of which, a bravura, had to be repeated.⁴²

Paul Hamburger, in the article "The Concert Arias" in The Mozart Companion, points out that "Vorrei, spiegarvi, oh Dio" "is a forebear of Fernando's [sic] 'Un'aura amorosa' from Così." In the later opera "the melody is enriched, the rhythm simplified, the harmony the same."⁴³ In "Vorrei, spiegarvi," Clorinda denies her devotion to her lover and urges him to seek happiness with Emilia, her rival. Einstein points out that this aria is "half lyric and half concertante, . . . full of subtle psychological insight, . . . but somewhat external and limited by Mozart's consciousness of the nature of Aloysia's cold virtuosity."⁴⁴ It is difficult to see how Einstein draws such a conclusion. The aria is in two sections, the first

⁴¹Quoted by Einstein, p. 368.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³p. 326.

⁴⁴p. 369.

slow and lyrical and the second faster with a good deal of coloratura work. Aloysia must have been especially adept at negotiating wide leaps; near the end of this aria there is a leap of two octaves and a third. The allegro section contains a part for solo oboe accompanied by pizzicato strings.

"No, no, che non sei capace," K. 419, is an allegro bravura aria with extremely difficult coloratura. In tone and structure this aria could be considered a study piece for the Queen of the Night's great vengeance aria in Die Zauberflöte. The coloratura is not used quite as effectively as Mozart would in the later work, but it is definitely from the same mold. This aria constitutes "a partial return to the stereotyped expression of heroic indignation."⁴⁵ Mozart would later adapt the stereotype in a more outstanding way.

Adamberger did not perform the aria written for him when Anfossi's opera was performed, apparently because of the intrigues of Mozart's famous rival, Salieri. Mozart wrote the following to his father about the incident:

During a short rehearsal, . . . Salieri took Adamberger aside and told him that Count Rosenberg would not be pleased if he put in an aria and that he advised him as his good friend not to do so. Adamberger, provoked by Rosenberg's objection and not knowing how to retaliate, was stupid enough to say, with ill-timed pride, "All right. But to prove that Adamberger has already made his reputation in Vienna and does not need to make a name for himself by singing music expressly written for him, he will only sing what is in the opera and will never again, as long as he

⁴⁵Ibid.

lives, introduce an aria."

Then, with characteristic lack of modesty Mozart writes, "What was the result? Why, that he was a complete failure, as was only to be expected!"⁴⁶ According to Mozart, this was only a plot on the part of Salieri; Count Rosenberg actually knew nothing about it. The result was, however, that Adamberger did not perform the aria in Anfossi's opera. Mozart thought that he could easily find a place for the aria in one of his own operas, but, of course, he did not.

This aria, "Per pietà, non ricercate," K. 420, appears without recitative and is not in da capo form. From a slow and halting beginning it steadily increases in emotion until the final allegro assai frantically rushes to the end. The broken melody of the opening effectively portrays the persona's broken heart, and his desperation is evident in the wide leaps and running eighth notes of the final section. Herr Adamberger missed a fine opportunity here for displaying his bravura technique.

This is the first of the concert arias that uses the clarinet, an instrument that entered the orchestra late in Mozart's career. Einstein points out that there is hardly another piece in which the composer uses so many tremoli, crescendi, and sforzati in the strings. Although the orchestra is not particularly large--clarinet, two

⁴⁶2:854.

bassoons, two horns, and strings--the high emotional level of the text prompted Mozart to use every instrument to full advantage. The aria is most rewarding for the singer, and the dramatic tension makes a profound effect on the hearers. Alfred Einstein hypothesizes that if this aria were in Figaro or Don Giovanni, it would be world-famous.⁴⁷

The arias composed as insertions in Anfossi's opera show signs of careful craftsmanship and great musical inspiration. One can be thankful that Mozart did not try to make them fit into the stylistic mold of Anfossi's work. In the performance of Il curioso indiscreto Mozart's arias no doubt seemed entirely out of place. Mozart could be no less than Mozart.

"Così dunque tradisci"--"Aspri rimorsi atroci," K. 432 (421a), was probably written for Carl Ludwig Fischer, Mozart's first Osmin. The text is taken from Metastasio's Temistocle, but it is not known whether it was written as a concert aria or an an insertion in an existing opera. Sebaste, after upbraiding a princess for her disloyalty, is stricken by remorse for his own treachery. The work opens with an expressive recitative. The aria is an allegro in which the tension is heightened by almost constant use of triplets in the strings and by strong forte-piano accents from all of the instruments. The use of the horns on these accents makes one think of the closing pages of Don Giovanni. The melody covers

⁴⁷p. 369.

a wide range--D to f¹--and effectively portrays the despair of Sebaste. In this aria Fischer was sure to show that his abilities were strong in tragedy as they were in the comedy Die Entführung aus dem Serail.

In December of 1783, Mozart composed a rondo for Adamberger to sing at a benefit concert. It is conjectured that this was the recitative "Misero! o sogno!" and aria "Aura, che intorno spiri," K. 431 (425b). The text is from Temistocle by Metastasio and depicts the hero in prison, shut away from life and help. The recitative which begins this piece is extremely dramatic and thoroughly in keeping with the grand scale we have come to expect from the monumental concert aria. The opening of the aria contains one of Mozart's most beautiful melodies. This aria is not in da capo form and quickens its tempo as the desperation mounts. However, since this is actually a concert aria and not to be used in an opera, the emotions are expressed with restraint.

The instrumentation calls for two flutes, two bassoons, two horns, and strings. The horns give the aria a dark quality which is unusual in Mozart's works. This aria is the most popular of the tenor concert arias; because of its lyrical quality and dramatic scope, it is a masterpiece in the genre.

After the aria for Adamberger, Mozart wrote no concert arias for almost three years. This brought the composer to the age of thirty. He had already composed

almost five hundred works, and in the five years left to him he would create some of the supreme masterpieces of music literature.

CHAPTER VI

COMPOSITIONS OF THE MASTER COMPOSER

(1786-91)

In March of 1786, a private performance of Idomeneo was given at the palace of Prince Karl Auersperg. For this occasion Mozart wrote the recitative and aria "Non più, tutto ascoltai"--"Non temer, amato bene," K. 490. This aria was written for Baron Pulini, a tenor, but the part is written in the soprano clef. Mozart later reset the text for soprano as K. 505, but sopranos also sing K. 490. The persona is Idamante, the son of Idomeneo. The aria has a violin obbligato part, which was written for Count August Hatzfeld, one of Mozart's best friends. The blend would probably be better for tenor and violin--the soprano voice tends to cover some of the violin passages. The recitative is long and is definitely not the composer's best.

In December of 1786, Mozart had an opportunity to reset the same text. This time the singer was Anna (Nancy) Selina Storace, the first Susanna in Le nozze di Figaro. Some of the musical material from K. 490 is used in K. 505, "Ch'io mi scordi di te"--"Non temer, amato bene," but the piece is reworked in such a way that the newer aria

must be considered one of Mozart's greatest achievements in the form. The most obvious difference is that the obbligato has now become a duet between voice and piano. Einstein states that this "accompanied duet for voice and clavier [is a] declaration of love in music."⁴⁸ Mozart also shortened the recitative to create a perfectly balanced work of art. If this aria had not been composed, K. 490 would probably appear to be a greater work than it does, but K. 505 is probably the most often performed of all of Mozart's concert arias.

In March of 1787, Mozart once again set a text written by Metastasio, one which he had set nine years earlier for Aloysia (K. 224). However, this time the singer was to be the bass Carl Ludwig Fischer, one of the foremost singers of the time. In this setting, "Alcandro lo confesso"--"Non so donde viene," K. 512, the composer adheres closely to the intentions of the librettist. The text is from Olimpiade; Clistene sings of his conflicting emotions as he confronts an unknown man who is really his lost son. Fischer was certainly an accomplished artist, if one can accurately judge by Mozart's music for him. After a brief recitative, the aria opens with a lyrical andante ($\frac{2}{2}$). Wide leaps prevail throughout the aria, and the range covers two octaves (E-e¹). A sudden shift occurs when the time signature

⁴⁸P. 74.

changes to $\frac{6}{8}$. The piece closes with some very difficult passagework, which has been omitted in performance by some basses.

Mozart's next concert aria, "Mentre ti lascio, o figlia," K. 513, was also a "father" aria written for a bass, Gottfried von Jacquin, who had been a friend of the Mozart family since 1783.⁴⁹ The text of this aria is taken from a libretto by Duca Sant'Angioli Morbilli entitled La disfatta di Dario. This opera seria had been set by Giovanni Paisiello in 1777 and by Tommaso Traëtta in 1778. The text is King Darius' fearful farewell to his daughter, Statira, who is torn between her love for her father and her love for his enemy, Alexander. This is probably the most often performed of the concert arias for basses. It offers ample opportunity for beautiful cantabile singing and expression of intense emotion without the extremes of range or flexibility required in K. 512.

During the late autumn of 1787, Mozart was visiting his friends Franz and Josefa Duscek in Prague. Apparently Wolfgang had promised to write a concert aria for Madame Duscek. Shortly before Mozart was to leave Prague, Josefa is reported to have locked the composer in a garden house with the threat that she would not release him until he had fulfilled his promise. With characteristic good humor, Mozart complied and wrote "Bella mia fiamma, addio"--

⁴⁹Schenk, p. 365.

"Resta, oh cara," K. 528. But when he was released, he told the singer that she could not have the aria unless she could sing it at sight. Mozart had composed some harmonic pitfalls for an eighteenth-century singer, particularly on the words "Quest'affanno, questo passo è terribile per me." However, Madame Duschek passed the test, and all were satisfied. One might suppose that an aria composed under such conditions would not have much artistic merit, but Mozart was able to satisfy his sense of humor and his artistic standards at the same time. This aria is another of the composer's major achievements in the form. It is supposed that the text was written by Lorenzo da Ponte, who was also in Prague at the time. The persona, as he goes to his death, bids farewell to his wife and to his friend, in whose keeping he leaves his loved ones. As has already been mentioned, the aria contains some difficult passages for the singer lacking in musicianship, but the range is not extreme, and the passagework is not extremely difficult. The most taxing part is the speedy upward-moving passage on the word terribile, which aptly paints the appropriate emotion.

In March of 1788, Mozart wrote "Ah se in ciel, benigne stelle," K. 538, the last of his arias for Aloysia Lange. The text, in which a lovesick girl asks the stars either to let her die or to give their blessings to her love, is taken from L'eroe cinese by Metastasio. This seems a rather slim text for the kind of embellishments

required by Aloysia. Therefore, the aria does not have the characteristic spirit and fire we have come to expect from Mozart's compositions for this extraordinary singer. There is ample bravura display in this aria but not much dramatic reason for it. There is one passage of fifteen measures on one syllable, and there are passages of expressive cantabile singing which fit the text very well, but Aloysia would not have been pleased without the bravura passages.

"Ein deutsches Kriegslied," K. 539, is in reality a song rather than an aria, but it is included in this discussion because of its orchestral accompaniment. The four strophes of the text were written by Johann Gleim. Mozart set it to music on March 5, 1788, for the comedian Friedrich Baumann, a bass who sang it at the Leopoldstadt Theatre. The colorful instrumentation includes two oboes, two bassoons, piccolo, two horns, and a large drum. Without a doubt, the text had special reference to the second Turkish war, which had just broken out.⁵⁰

"Un bacio di mano," K. 541, is a buffo arietta for bass written by Mozart to be inserted in Le gelosie fortunate by Pasquale Anfossi. The singer was Francesco Albertarelli, who sang Don Giovanni in the first Vienna performance. It is interesting to note that the theme

⁵⁰ Otto Erich Deutsch, Mozart: A Documentary Biography (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1965), p. 309.

"anticipates note for note the third theme in the first movement of the 'Jupiter' symphony."⁵¹ The text of the aria may have been written by Lorenzo da Ponte. The librettist of Anfossi's opera was Filippo Livigni, but he did not supply the text for Mozart's added aria. The persona, a witty Frenchman named Giro, is giving ironic advice to a somewhat stupid lover who lacks worldly wisdom and falls in love with women after kissing their hands. This is a clever aria, but it is extremely brief and does not stand on its own well enough to merit concert performance. It might be performed, however, in conjunction with other such works and form an interesting group, even with piano accompaniment.

For a performance of Le nozze di Figaro in July of 1789, Mozart composed an aria to replace Susanna's "Deh vieni, non tardar." The soprano, Adriana Ferrarese del Bene, probably requested a piece to show off her bravura technique. Unfortunately, the aria "Al desio," K. 577, does not fit the rest of the opera stylistically; the bravura display is out of place, particularly for Susanna. Once again it is assumed that the text was written by da Ponte. Needless to say, the interpolated aria did not retain its place in Le nozze di Figaro. It must be pointed out, however, that the aria does function well as a concert aria. Even though it has no instrumental introduction, it is long enough and substantial enough to

⁵¹Einstein, p. 373.

stand alone. It opens with a larghetto melody and closes with an exciting allegro. The bravura passages are not unreasonable in their demands. Ferrarese del Bene exhibited bad taste in her demand for a substitute aria, but the resulting composition is not without its usefulness.

In August of 1789, Mozart wrote an aria to be inserted in Domenico Cimarosa's intermezzo I due baroni di Rocca Azzurra. The aria was written for the soprano Louise Villeneuve, who was the sister of Adriana Ferrarese del Bene and the first Dorabella in Così fan tutte. The text of "Alma grande e nobil core," K. 578, was written by Giovanni Palomba. This is a buffo aria in which Madame Laura expresses her indignation at the way her unworthy lover has treated her. The aria aptly portrays the pompous Madame Laura and also has musical value. Otto Jahn has written that the piece contains "forcible expression without making any great demands on the voice."⁵² The allegro assai section certainly is not for the novice, but, once again, the demands are certainly reasonable ones.

In 1789 Le nozze di Figaro was revived in Vienna, and Madame Ferrarese del Bene was once again to sing Susanna. This time Mozart wrote an aria for her, "Un moto di gioia," K. 579, to replace "Venite inginocchiatevi." At least this time she did not ask for a bravura display piece. Mozart's comment was, "The little aria . . . ought, I think, to be a success, provided she is able

⁵²3:334.

to sing it in an artless manner, which, however, I very much doubt."⁵³ The aria is extremely light-weight, even for Figaro, and the range is modest. The composer made a piano reduction of the score, and, indeed, this aria functions almost on the level of the song.

In September of 1789, a German version of Il barbiere di Siviglia by Giovanni Paisiello was to be performed in Vienna. The part of Rosina was to be sung by Constanze Mozart's younger sister, Josefa Hofer, who would also be the first Queen of the Night in Die Zauberflöte. It is possible that the production was abandoned, because Mozart left the aria "Schon lacht der holde Frühling," K. 580, unfinished. However, enough was completed so that others have made performing editions of it. The aria was probably intended for the lesson scene in Paisiello's opera. It contains a love song of a shepherdess for her shepherd, Lindor, the name the Count gives himself in Il barbiere di Siviglia. The opening and closing sections exhibit the dazzling coloratura technique for which Madame Hofer was famous. This makes the aria prohibitive for all but the most accomplished technicians. The middle section is an andante which expresses the shepherdess's sadness. Here Mozart showed great awareness of the text. The bravura display exhibited in the opening and closing sections is somewhat empty, but if the singer has the requisite technique to make these sections exciting and

⁵³3:1389.

possesses the necessary expressive abilities for the central section, the aria will certainly be worthy of performance.

In October of 1789, Mozart wrote two interpolated arias for Louise Villeneuve. These were to be inserted in Vicente Martín y Soler's opera, Il burbero di buon core. The first of the two arias is "Chi sà, chi sà qual sia," K. 582, in which the faithful Lucilla wonders what can have disturbed her lover. In this aria there are no variations of tempo but a simple andante throughout. The piece contains some brief passages of expressive bravura work. Wyzewa and Saint-Foix write that the orchestration was obviously very carefully done.⁵⁴ The aria is just difficult enough to be challenging, and worthy of more performances than it receives.

The second of the arias for Villeneuve, "Vado, ma dove? o Dei!" K. 583, is an intensification of Lucilla's feelings of insecurity about her loved one. It is interesting that Mozart reverses his usual procedure. He begins with an agitated allegro and follows it with an expressive andante sostenuto. Once again the aria is of moderate range but demands great sensitivity in delivery. If one is to judge by the works written by Mozart for her, Louise Villeneuve was an accomplished artist. The range is far from extreme, but one must remember that the role of Dorabella in Così fan tutte which was written for her has

⁵⁴5:71.

been traditionally assigned to a mezzo-soprano. It may be that her voice was of this richly expressive type.

As Mozart was writing Così fan tutte in December of 1789, he felt that the aria for Guglielmo, "Rivolgete a lui lo sguardo," K. 584, interrupted the flow of the action, so he replaced it with "Non siate ritrosi." He was wise to make the adjustment, but he was also correct in entering the former aria in his list of concert arias. Jahn believes it to be on the level of Leporello's "Madamina" in Don Giovanni.⁵⁵ The Guglielmo in the premiere of Così fan tutte was a basso buffo by the name of Benucci. The role of Figaro was also written for him, so we can get an accurate impression of his voice from Mozart's music. Otto Jahn credits him with being "a bass buffo of the first rank" and states that "he possessed an extremely round, full, fine bass voice." He also reports that he was considered a first-rate actor as well as a singer and that he had the rare merit of never exaggerating.⁵⁶ The beginning of the aria (allegro) is addressed to the two young ladies, as Guglielmo tries to impress them with tales of his and Ferrando's accomplishments. At the allegro molto, Fiordiligi and Dorabella leave, and Guglielmo exults in what he thinks will be an easy victory. The aria contains many fine comic touches, and its range is such that it can be sung by a baritone or a bass.

⁵⁵ 3:258.

⁵⁶ 3:51, 83.

"Per questa bella mano," K. 612, was written for Franz Xaver Gerl, who would be the first Sarastro in Die Zauberflöte. It also includes a very difficult obbligato part for double bass which was originally played by Friedrich Pischelberger. The author of the text and the occasion for which the aria was written are unknown. It is possible that Mozart was using his well-known sense of humor in setting this simple declaration of love for bass voice and double bass obbligato. However, the role of Sarastro demands an intensely sensitive artist, and Gerl was probably equal to the task of achieving a meaningful interpretation of this aria. The work demands a sensitive bass voice and a highly accomplished double bass player.

Mozart's last concert aria was written in Prague in September of 1791, just three months before his death. Constanze Mozart did not believe that "Io ti lascio, o cara, addio," K. Anh. 245 (621a), was written by her husband, so for many years its authenticity was questioned. However, in 1933, the autograph was found. The accompaniment of this bass aria is for strings alone, and it is strophic in form. The beautiful adagio melody expresses intense emotion at the moment of separation.⁵⁷ Indeed, the words of the aria seem to be prophetic:

Io ti lascio, oh cara, addio
vivi più felice e scordati di me.

⁵⁷Wyzewa and Saint-Foix, 5:33.

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Addio!

I leave you, o dear one, farewell;
Live happier and forget me.

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Farewell!

Paul Hamburger, in his excellent article on the concert arias in The Mozart Companion, states that "the form of the concert aria was created, though not invented, by Mozart, and completed its history, though it did not die, with him."⁵⁸ With regard to both quantity and quality, Mozart made the most significant contributions to this art form. Johann Christian Bach, Franz Joseph Haydn, and other composers before Mozart wrote worthy arias, but they were primarily for insertion into the operas of other composers, and not the grand concert scena that Mozart was to develop. After Mozart, other composers made notable contributions to the repertoire, such as Beethoven's "Ah! perfido!" However, performance situations were changing, and the singer was losing the place of prominence he had enjoyed. The composition of isolated examples of the concert aria genre has continued into the twentieth century. However, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart has made the most important contribution to concert aria literature. The majority of his works in the genre are masterpieces or at least works of great compositional skill and interest. In recent years there has been a renaissance of interest in the vocal music of this era

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p. 324.

and the extraordinary singers who made it possible. It is to be hoped that this renewed interest will lead to more performances of these worthy works.

APPENDIX

NOTES ON PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

Brief mention must be made of some of the problems in performance practice which exist in the execution of Mozart's concert arias. However, one will not find definite rules for dealing with these problems; for every general rule, a number of exceptions can be cited. As was stated above, the singers for whom these arias were written were highly trained specialists, and the elements of style necessary to handle these problems of execution had become second nature to them; hence the necessity for careful study on the part of the Mozart singer and for coaching with someone who is fully conversant with the style of the period.

Present practice in the execution of the appoggiatura varies from those who ignore it to those who adhere to it pedantically.⁵⁹ However, this figure is not merely ornamental; it serves the purpose of giving an accent where needed and of making the melody more singable. The long or changeable appoggiatura takes half the value of the note it precedes or two-thirds the value if the note is

⁵⁹Kunze, 1:xix.

dotted. If the main note is followed by a rest, the appoggiatura takes the value of the main note, and the main note takes the value of the rest. The short or unchangeable appoggiatura is always executed by the singer's taking a brief amount of time from the main note. The interpretation of these figures is determined by the tempo and character of the composition.⁶⁰

Another performance problem concerns the execution of staccati--Mozart used both the dot and the line for this purpose. After 1775, Mozart usually used the dot in a series of sixteenth notes and the line on an isolated note.⁶¹ It is impossible to cite a universally accepted rule, but it is generally believed that the composer used the dot for a light, short staccato and the line for a heavier accent and stress. Once again, each individual case must be carefully evaluated.

A question also exists concerning the use of the keyboard in the accompagnato recitative. Some sources say that it should be used only when the singer is not singing, while others contend that it should be used all of the time. The best practice is perhaps somewhere between the two extremes. In some arias there are places at which the other instruments pause and only the voice and the bass line continue (K. 79 [73d], K. 77 [73e]). Obviously, in these cases the participation of the keyboard instrument is essential. One cannot look for a mechanical

⁶⁰Ibid., 1:xx.

⁶¹Ibid., 1:xiv.

rule but must analyze the dramatic situation and the effect. It was also the practice of Mozart's day to strengthen the bass line in an aria by adding bassoons, especially if the orchestra involved was weak in the low strings.

Mozart often placed dynamic markings in the instrumental parts, but he did not place them in the vocal parts. The singer must be careful not to assume that the instrumental markings were meant to apply to the vocal part. They might serve as a very general guideline, but usually they refer to the orchestra's accompanying role.

The few suggestions that one can find for the execution of cadenzas are not usually followed very rigidly. For instance, it has been stated that the singer should not take a breath within the cadenza.⁶² However, the less rigid interpretation is that the singer should take the breath in such a way so as not to disturb the unity of the cadenza. It is most important to remember that the cadenza should fit the context of the aria. Once again, the best aid in solving all of these performance problems is a thorough knowledge of and familiarity with the style of the period.

⁶² Ibid., 1:xx.

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