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## One More Time: Mozart and his Cadenzas

AMONG THE MANY THINGS that Christoph Wolff has studied to good effect are Mozart's keyboard-concerto cadenzas. He edited some of them for the *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*, and he has published two fundamental articles about them.<sup>1</sup> Those articles, like most worthwhile research, answered some questions while raising yet others. Mozart's cadenzas in any case remain a site of contention. This essay will attempt to locate the causes of that contention and explore how our historical interpretations might be refined.

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On March 27, 1799 Mozart's widow Constanze wrote to the Leipzig publishers Breitkopf & Härtel that she had, and was willing to lend to them (for a price), the autograph manuscripts of 14 cadenzas for her late husband's keyboard concertos. Almost in passing, she remarked that the cadenzas "were written only for his pupils."<sup>2</sup> Constanze's explanation for the existence of written-out cadenzas for the keyboard concertos was accepted at face value by the mid-19th-century founders of modern Mozart scholarship, the biographer Otto Jahn and the cataloguer Ludwig Köchel, and has been reiterated in various guises by a number of later writers.

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1. Christoph Wolff, "Zur Chronologie der Klavierkonzert-Kadenzen Mozarts," *Mozart-Jahrbuch* (1978-9), 235-46; "Cadenzas and Styles of Improvisation," in *Mozart's Piano Concertos: Perspectives on Mozart Performance*, ed. R Larry Todd and Peter Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 228-38.
  2. *Mozart Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, IV: 235. " ... [die Cadenzen] hat er nur für seine Scholaren gemacht ... " Apparently nothing came of this and Constanze eventually gave or sold the autographs to the Viennese publishing firm Artaria, which issued them in 1801 (*RISM* M5853).

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Nonetheless, Constanze's apparently straightforward explanation of the cadenzas has created discomfort for many later pianists, critics, and music historians, who believe either that Constanze was misinformed or that she was putting a spin on the truth in order to enhance her husband's reputation as a brilliant improviser. The doubters have wanted to believe that Mozart played his own written-out cadenzas. I can think of two, interrelated reasons for their belief:

1. Improvising anything in the context of a "perfect" work of art—that is to say, in the context of a "masterpiece"—must have seemed a surefire way of undoing its perfection. Better to let the master (for which read: divinely inspired genius) decide what is appropriate. We cannot hope to do as well as or better than Mozart, only worse.
2. As the work-concept became firmly entrenched in the teaching and reception of classical music, performers received progressively less training in improvisation, and that art was lost to most players.

Among the questions debated about Mozart's cadenzas are the following six:

1. The first has already been mentioned: in performing his keyboard concertos, did Mozart improvise cadenzas on the spur of the moment or did he work them out ahead of time?
2. When Mozart wrote down cadenzas for others, did he expect them to be played literally or did he hope that they would be used as models to be imitated or enlarged upon?
3. Cadenzas survive for the great majority of his keyboard concertos. Did Mozart consider them fixed parts of the concertos to which they belonged?
4. If Mozart thought of his cadenzas as an integral part of the concertos, why then were they almost always on detached sheets of paper, usually transmitted separately from the scores and parts, and subsequently also published separately?
5. What are the implications of the existence of more than one set of cadenzas for a single concerto?
6. Are the written cadenzas transcriptions of Mozart's improvisations, preparation for those improvisations, fixed texts that he executed more or less literally, or none of the above but rather what he thought others less gifted than he would do well to perform?

Let us take up these six questions in turn.

1) *In performing his keyboard concertos, did Mozart improvise cadenzas on the spur of the moment or did he work them out ahead of time?*

It would be nonsense to maintain that Mozart was incapable of improvising cadenzas. We have eyewitness accounts, as well as his own letters, describing his activities as an improviser of variation sets, sonatas, fantasies, and fugues. And as he wrote to his sister about an *Eingang* for the finale of K. 271, "I always play whatever occurs to me at the moment."<sup>3</sup> But the fact that Mozart was capable of improvising says little about whether he customarily did so in his cadenzas, and nothing at all about any preparation that may have preceded his improvisations. When composing or rehearsing a concerto, he was surely collecting ideas and strategies for the cadenzas he knew he would have to play. Mozart presumably had good and bad days; possibly when he felt his best physically and mentally, he was more inclined to show off, to take greater risks; on the other hand, when he was tired, annoyed or in low spirits, he may have fallen back on something that had proved tried and true. If a cadenza, whether improvised or written, pleased him or his audience, why should he have hesitated to make use of it again in another performance, especially if he had a new audience? We must not allow our admiration for his extraordinary talent to lure us into imagining him as supernatural rather than human. In any case, the question itself is misleading: Mozart was confronted not with an either/or situation, but rather with a range of possibilities.

2) *When Mozart provided written-out cadenzas, did he expect them to be reproduced literally or did he hope that they would be used as models to be imitated?*

As far as I know, neither Mozart nor those who received cadenzas from him left reports about this, so we must approach the question indirectly. From Mozart's correspondence with his father and sister, we know that they expected him to provide her with cadenzas.<sup>4</sup> This seems to suggest either that Nannerl was incapable of providing her own cadenzas, or that she felt her cadenzas (or cadenzas by Leopold) would not be good enough. But given that Nannerl was an expert keyboard player who could realize figured bass at sight in a professional manner, and is known to have

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3. *MBA*, III: 251, lines 13-14 ("wenn ich dieses Concert spielle, so mache ich allzeit was mir einfällt").

4. *MBA*, III: 171-2, lines 6, 26-7; 179, line 5; 251, Lines 12-14; 256, lines 8-9; 295, lines 84-6; 318, lines 21-22; 319, lines 7-8; 342, lines 48-52; 380, lines 13-14; 387, lines 79-80.

composed songs and minuets, she very likely was able to compose her own cadenzas, even though she seems to have had no great talent for composition. The argument about quality, often expanded beyond Nannerl to the notion that *no one* could match Mozart's level of excellence, is one frequently made, and one to which I will return. Here I give only the following remarks.

We know something of Mozart's teaching methods from a letter describing composition lessons in Paris in 1778 for Mlle. de Guines and from the surviving papers containing his lessons with Thomas Attwood, Barbara Ployer, and Franz Jacob Freystädtler.<sup>5</sup> Not surprisingly, these documents demonstrate that Mozart liked to provide models for his pupils to imitate or enlarge upon. We might also venture a psychological explanation for Nannerl's requests for cadenzas, *Eingänge* and ornamentation for her brother's concertos: Leopold and Nannerl were devastated when Wolfgang abandoned them by remaining in Vienna. As much as possible, even through periods of poor communications with him, they clung to the things that had previously given their lives meaning and promise: Wolfgang's music. A cadenza from Wolfgang may therefore have seemed like a precious shard of that broken promise.

3) *Given that cadenzas survive for the great majority of his keyboard concertos, did Mozart consider them a part of the completed "work"?*

Unless I can define "work," I will be unable to say anything meaningful on this point, and of course, it is precisely the work-concept that gives rise to the question. If a work is a fixed object, then logically, cadenzas made for it by Mozart must either be part of that work or not. The old Breitkopf & Härtel *Gesamtausgabe*, following the practice of Mozart, his copyists, and his publishers, kept the cadenzas separate from the concertos, whereas the *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe* has inserted them into the concertos.<sup>6</sup> The latter arrangement is of course convenient for purposes of study and performance. Coming at a time when the concept of "the work" has been much questioned and deconstructed, however, the *NMA's* arrangement is not without its ironies.

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5. *MBA*, II: 356-7, lines 59-95; *NMA* (*Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke*), X/30/1-2.

6. *NMA*, V/15/1-8. Latterly the *NMA* has published a supplementary volume containing, among other things, all of Mozart's cadenzas for his keyboard concertos (X/28/2).

It has long been known that Mozart usually composed—or at least notated—his full scores in layers, most often the *Hauptstimme* and the functional bass first, then the inner parts, and finally some tidying up. Investigations in recent decades by Wolfgang Plath, Alan Tyson, Gertraut Haberkamp, Cliff Eisen, Ulrich Konrad, Dexter Edge, and others have suggested a more extended process for Mozart's creation of a "work." Although not all of Mozart's works necessarily passed through all possible stages, and although not all the sources survive, the creation of a "work" could involve improvisation at the clavier, sketches, fragments, drafts, autograph scores or parts, authorized or unauthorized copyists' scores or parts, and authorized or unauthorized publications. Where should we place cadenzas in these sometimes ill-defined and not-necessarily-linear stages of creation?

Note first that among the 21 solo concertos under consideration here, there are only two (K.491 in C minor and 537 in D major) whose autograph manuscripts, although laid out from start to finish in full score, were never really completed. In K.537 the bass line of the keyboard part is missing in many passages, whereas in the C-minor concerto some passages in the solo part are in chaos, occasionally even clashing with the orchestral parts, which themselves could use some tidying up.<sup>7</sup>

Now note that among the 21 solo concertos under consideration there are only six for which no authentic cadenzas are known to survive.<sup>8</sup> Among the six are K.491 and 537. This makes perfect sense if you regard K.491 and 537 as having been brought only to a stage at which they could be performed by Mozart himself as soloist, but by nobody else. Insofar as this is correct, then for Mozart the writing down of cadenzas belonged to a stage through which K.491 and 537 never passed, namely, preparation for dissemination to other performers, which in turn increases the probability that the cadenzas we have were probably generally not for his own use. But what of the other four concertos without surviving authentic cadenzas? Well, two of them (K.466 and 467) once did have cadenzas that, a letter of Mozart's reveals, were sent to Nannerl.<sup>9</sup> This leaves only two fully notated solo keyboard concertos out of 19 with no history of authentic cadenzas (K.482 and 503). It seems reasonable to hypothesize, then, that they too once had cadenzas, which have gone missing.

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7. Robert D. Levin, "The Devil's in the Details: Neglected Aspects of Mozart's Piano Concertos," *Mozart's Piano Concertos: Text, Context, Interpretation*, ed. Neal Zaslaw (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989), 29-50.
  8. K.466, 467, 482, 491, 503, 537.
  9. *MBA*, IV: 387, lines 79-80.

4) *If Mozart thought of his cadenzas as an integral part of the concertos, why were they almost always on detached sheets of paper, which were usually transmitted separately from the scores and parts and subsequently also published separately?*

Perhaps this was a matter of showmanship, or to put the matter less kindly, deception. The explanation of cadenzas that is chronologically, geographically, and psychologically closest to Mozart's practices—that found in Daniel Gottlob Türk's *Klavierschule* of 1789<sup>10</sup>—tells us that a cadenza is meant to be improvised and should be performed as though it had just occurred to the performer; but as it is risky for most players to improvise it on the spot, they ought to write it down or at least sketch it in advance. This suggests a possible motivation for keeping the cadenza manuscripts separate from the score or parts: those who could not or would not improvise their cadenzas may have performed the concerto proper with a keyboard part or score on the music stand, but would have hidden any written-out cadenzas, performing them from memory in a simulation of improvisation.

In the end, this is another misguided question arising from a desire for Mozart's masterpieces to be whole and fully formed, not aleatoric, in their content. Cadenzas, however, were an aspect of Mozart's concertos whose precise function was to be spontaneous, witty, surprising—not predictable. As Türk (quoting Agricola) put it: ". . .it is as little possible to prescribe good cadenzas. . .as it is to teach someone to memorize flashes of wit beforehand."<sup>11</sup>

5) *What are the implications of the existence of more than one set of cadenzas for a single concerto?*

Possible implications include these:

1. Cadenzas were not meant to be fixed and unvarying over time.
2. Mozart's ideas about cadenzas evolved. Prior to 1779 or 1780 his cadenzas were mostly non-thematic; after that date they were mostly thematic<sup>12</sup> and gradually got longer and more elaborate.

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10. Daniel Gottlob Türk's *Klavierschule, oder Anweisung zum Klavierspielen für Lehrer und Lernende mit kritischen Anmerkungen* (Leipzig, 1789), 299-322. What Mozart calls „Eingang“ Türk calls „Übergang.“ Also Danuta Mirka, „The Cadence of Mozart's Cadenzas,“ *Journal of Musicology* (2005), 22:292-325.

11. Türk, 313, after Johann Friedrich Agricola in the introduction to his *Anleitung zur Singkunst* (Berlin: Winter, 1757), itself a translation of Pier Francesco Tosi's *Opinioni de'cantori antichi, e moderni*. (Bologna: L. dalla Volpe, 1723).

12. Three decades earlier Quantz was already recommending that cadenzas have thematic links to the movement in which they are inserted (*Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Voss, 1752), 154.

3. If he gave his own manuscript set of cadenzas to a student or patron, Mozart would have had to write new ones when an occasion arose to teach or sell that concerto again. From this follows a fourth implication.
4. Even allowing for the uneven survival of sources, keyboard concertos with two or more authentic sets of cadenzas—there are seven of these<sup>13</sup>—are probably works that Mozart taught or sold over a relatively long period of time.

6) *Are the written cadenzas transcriptions of Mozart's improvisations, preparation for those improvisations, fixed texts that he executed more or less literally, or none of the above but rather what he thought others less gifted than he would do well to perform?*

I see no reason why written cadenzas could not have served any or all of these functions. The pre-1779 non-thematic cadenzas, especially those written for the little chamber concertos by Schroeter and von Beecke or based on Raupach, Schobert, Honauer, and C. P. E. Bach, are so simple and generic that it is difficult to imagine why they needed to be written down at all. Quite understandably, therefore, people prefer to think of the longer, later, theme-based, psychologically-more-profound, musically-more-complex cadenzas as what Mozart himself played. Who can blame them? Those cadenzas provide, after all, the only time-travel machine we have, and don't we wish we could hear Mozart improvising? But by what tortured path of logic are we entitled to say that among written-down cadenzas, easy ones must have been for lesser mortals and longer, more elaborate ones for the master himself? I hold the view that, taken as a whole, the evidence suggests that Mozart usually played something different from the cadenzas he notated. However, if I am to continue to hold that view, I must come to terms with a lucid argument that Christoph Wolff has made against it. Here's what he wrote:

With quite few exceptions Mozart kept the cadenza manuscripts in his own possession. By habit he jealously guarded his personal performance materials in order to ensure, in particular, that his concerto scores were not copied without his authorization. [ ... ] (O)utside the inner family circle there exist virtually no copies."<sup>14</sup>

By "inner family circle" Wolff refers to Mozart, his father, and his sister.

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13. K.175 with new finale 382, 246, 271, 414, 415, 453, and 456.

14. Wolff, "Cadenzas and Styles," 230.

I wish to propose a different interpretation. Wolff cites Mozart's cover letter to his father, which he sent with K.382 (the new finale for his first non-pastiche concerto, K.175). Mozart wrote, "I beg you to guard it like a jewel—and not to give it to a soul to play. . . . I composed it for myself and no one else but my dear sister must play it." This much is unambiguous: Mozart's father had taught him to guard his scores and parts from theft by copyists which, as we know also from Joseph Haydn's correspondence with Artaria, was a genuine danger.<sup>15</sup>

But consider what Mozart sometimes did with concertos when they were no longer brand new. After he had exploited a concerto as his own performance vehicle, he would sometimes teach it to a talented student or sell a copy to a patron who promised not to allow anyone else to have it. Mozart was not above telling more than one patron that he had purchased quasi-exclusive rights to a work and that no one else had it. His next step could be an attempt to sell manuscript copies himself by subscription, or to allow one of the Viennese music-copying firms—Johann Traeg was his favorite—to advertise copies for sale. And for a few concertos, there were engraved editions.

If we had the sets of parts that once belonged to Mozart's pupils and patrons, we would be in a better position to judge the dissemination (or non-dissemination) of the cadenzas (even allowing for the ephemerality of loose sheets of paper), but we do not have them. There is, however, a set of parts for K.246 copied on French paper, which Mozart apparently gave or sold to someone when he was in Paris in 1778. It contains—on a separate leaf of a different paper-type and not in Mozart's hand—a cadenza that is a variant of a cadenza that comes down to us in two other versions in entirely authentic sources.<sup>16</sup> Note too that the 18 cadenzas published by Artaria in 1801 contain material for only 8 concertos, thus leaving unaccounted-for 13 other concertos, to say nothing of the already mentioned second and even third sets of cadenzas for seven of the concertos. Johann André managed to publish 36 authentic cadenzas, which supply material for only 12 concertos—four more than Artaria had located. Possibly, therefore, the 14 cadenzas that Constanze had offered Breitkopf & Härtel in 1799 belonged to six or seven concertos. From these calculations one can produce a statistical demonstration that, far from systematically hanging on to his cadenzas, Mozart gave many of them away.<sup>17</sup>

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15. *MBA*, II: 58-9, lines 65-82; *Joseph Haydn: Gesammelte Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, ed. H.C. Robbins Landon and Dénes Bartha (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1965), 179-80.

16. Tibor Szász, "An Authentic Parisian Source for Mozart's Piano Concerto in C Major, K.246: New Ideas on the Questions of Continuo and Cadenzas," *Early Keyboard Journal* 15 (1997), 7-42.

17. Some 75 cadenzas for 18 clavier concertos survive, whereas Constanze and her helpers (Maximilian Stadler and Georg Nissen) could find only 14 among Mozart's paper. The counts 14 and 75 include *Eingänge* as well.

The six questions I have just discussed are important, but just as important is a seventh question that (in my opinion) has not been asked often enough or persistently enough. The seventh question might be put this way: *In the matter of cadenzas what was the norm, the unmarked position, the horizon of expectations, the "default position"?*

To begin it may be useful to consider cadenzas in the light of other types of ornamentation. When it comes to free ornamentation in the 17th and 18th centuries, there are dozens of sources, printed and manuscript, that present a plain melody over a bass line along with one, two, or more increasingly elaborate ornamented versions of the melody. Perhaps the most famous early example is Orpheus's "*Possente spirto*" in Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*. There are dozens of examples from the 18th century of ornamentation for vocal and instrumental music notated above the plain melody.

A rationalization for this sort of arrangement was offered by two Italian composers in the second decade of the 17th century.<sup>18</sup> There are, they tell us, three types of performers: the first is the beginner or novice, the second the poorly educated virtuoso, and the third the true musician. Novices need the unornamented version for the simple reason that it is all they can cope with. Poorly educated virtuosos are unable to create their own ornaments and depend on someone else to do it for them. True musicians, however, require the plain melody so that the chord tones and voice leading will be plainly evident, to serve as the basis for their own ornaments.

Leopold Mozart wrote something related to this in his *Violinschule* when he rejected proposals to write out appoggiaturas, passing tones, and other ornamental passages in large notes. His objection was that some performers would not know which were the ornamental notes and which the structural notes, and would therefore fall into the error of ornamenting ornaments.<sup>19</sup>

In her dissertation, Faye Ferguson<sup>20</sup> demonstrated that expectations in keyboard-concerto performances of Mozart's time were generally different for

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18. In the prefaces to Bartolomeo Barbarino, *Il secondo libro delli [sic] motetti* (Venice, 1614), with his accompanying *Spartitura con la parte passeggiata* (Venice, 1614) (*RISM* B74 and 75); and to Enrico Radesca, *Il quanto libro delle canzonette, madrigali et arie* (Venice, 1617), as cited in Rosy Moffa, "Enrico Antonio Radesca (c.1570-1625), Maestro di Capella di Carlo Emanuele I di Savoia," *Note d'archivio per la storia musicale*, n.s. (1986), IV, 119-52: 148.

19. Leopold Mozart, *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule* (Augsburg: Lotter, 1756), 209-10.

20. Linda Faye Ferguson, "Col basso and Generalbass in Mozart's Keyboard Concertos: Notation, Performance Theory, and Practice" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1983), 101-218.

professional soloists than they were for dilettantes. Besides serving as soloist, the professional was expected to direct the performance and provide a continuo realization during the *tutti*s. The dilettante was to play only the solo passages, resting during the *tutti*s while the concertmaster led. By extrapolation this may help to explain why Mozart wrote no cadenzas for his flute, oboe, bassoon, horn, or violin concertos. Generally speaking, they were meant for professionals or dilettantes with professional level skills, not for the relatively inexperienced young women who comprised most of the market for keyboard music of all types. Of course, there were always exceptions: for instance, Mozart's talented pupil Barbara Ployer, who had more than enough training in music theory to compose her own cadenzas. One need only read the sections about cadenzas in 18th-century treatises by Tosi, Hiller, Quantz, C. P. E. Bach, Agricola, Leopold Mozart, Mancini, Türk, and others to conclude that well-trained performers were expected to be able to compose their own cadenzas.

Taken as a whole and applied to cadenzas in Mozart's keyboard concertos, the heterogeneous information presented above suggests that novices may have played either just a cadential trill or a brief, generic cadenza. Incompletely educated virtuosi would have played Mozart's or someone else's cadenzas, written down and memorized. True musicians played their own cadenzas, whether prepared in advance or improvised on the spot.

Although the tripartite division of performers is perhaps overly simple, it also has a certain ring of common sense to it. I see no reason why the musicians with whom Mozart dealt would not also have fallen into the three general categories (as well as various stages in between), just as musicians today do. That being the case, I think I know very well into which category Mozart would have fit.

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TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY PERFORMERS who are able to compose or improvise their own cadenzas but hesitate to do so most often cite as their reason that anything they do will be inferior to what Mozart did. This may be true, but it misses the point: the cadenza is supposed to be a moment when something unexpected happens. If the same cadenzas are used over and over, an important aesthetic feature is devalued. Türk compared the effect of a good cadenza to a dream, in which events that have been compressed into the space of a few minutes make a powerful impression. The purpose of a successful cadenza is precisely wit, excitement, and risk, not perfection.

Generations of doubters owe Constanze Mozart an apology. She seems to have known whereof she spoke when she remarked that her late husband's cadenzas "were written only for his pupils."

Neal Zaslaw