

MOZART: PIANO CONCERTO NO. 27

Elusive Simplicity?

Perusal script

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Introduction

Narrator

Vienna... Austria... in the 21st Century...

Rauhensteingasse... The 'Lane of the Rough Stone'...

Here Mozart and his family lived for the last year of his life... from 1790 to 1791..

There was a restaurant just along the street in those days too... It belonged to Ignaz Jahn... the Imperial caterer...

On the floor above... Mr Jahn had a music room...

It's three rooms now ... A library, for the Ministry of Finance...

Mr.Jahn hired this place out for concerts...

Beethoven performed here...

And Mozart... many times...

On the evening of March 4th 1791 this was where he took part in the last public concert of his life ...

If the long narrow room was full it held perhaps 400 people...

The orchestra would have been tiny... a dozen strings, a handful of winds...

There was no space for more...

Actor

Herr Bear will have the honour, this Friday March 4th, in the room of Herr Jahn, of giving a varied recital on his clarinet...

Madame Lange will sing...

and Herr Kapellmeister Mozart will play a concerto on the Fortepiano...

Narrator

What Mozart played... was probably his new piano concerto... finished two months before...

Number 27... the last he would ever write...

Music example 1 The opening of the concerto up to bar 26 downbeat (52")

Narrator

In the late 1780s... a journalist described the Vienna Mozart knew.

Actor

The city and its suburbs are laid out in a circle, twenty miles round...

At least a quarter of a million people live here, from all the European nations.... There's a numerous, wealthy and brilliant nobility... A prosperous middle class... And in the streets a continuous bustle of people, horses and waggons...

Narrator

Mozart loved this crowded city

Actor

For my *métier*, this is the best place in the world!

Narrator

His apartment was right in the center... just a few minutes on foot... or horseback... from most of the places he had to get to...

Actor

Here the streets are never deserted, whatever the time of day. There are chairs on the sidewalks, ices in the coffee houses...

Narrator

There were more than 70 coffee-houses...

Actor

In a coffee-house one may study, play cards, chat, sleep, do business, talk politics, read the newspapers... In some, people are beginning to smoke tobacco... The usual game... is billiards...

Narrator

Mozart adored billiards and had a billiard-table in his apartment... with 5 balls, 12 cues and a lantern with 4 candles...

Actor

Many a game I played with him there... and I always lost...

Narrator

This was not a rich family, but not poor either...

They had two children to feed and clothe... and two servant girls...

Actor

It is a lie that my wife is extravagant... What she needs she makes for herself... and she dresses her own hair every day.

Narrator

Mozart himself had a hairdresser... Mr Pfannhauser... who called at six o'clock every morning...

Actor

One day I was completing Mozart's pigtail, when he stood up and dragged me after him into the next room... and started to play on his fortepiano...

I was so amazed, I let go his pigtail and didn't finish till he stood up...

Music example 2

Mvt 1, cadenza from bar 13 to 30 (30'') played on the FORTEPIANO

Narrator

Mozart's daily life was hectic... His father Leopold...

Actor

My dear daughter!

Here in your brother's house, we never get to bed before one. And I never get up before nine. Every day there are concerts, and the whole time is given to teaching, music, composing and so forth. It's impossible to describe the hustle and bustle. I feel quite out of it. If only the concerts were over! Since my arrival your brother's piano has been taken at least a dozen times to the theatre or some other house.

Narrator

A few streets away was the vast palace from which the whole Habsburg Empire was ruled...

The late Emperor Joseph II was a cultured man... and popular because he introduced liberal laws and greater freedom of speech... Several of his advisers were Mozart's supporters...

And he himself appreciated Mozart...

Actor

The theatre could not have been more crowded and every box was full. But what pleased me most was that His Majesty was present and, goodness! – how delighted he was, and how he applauded me!

Narrator

In 1790 Joseph died and was succeeded by his brother Leopold...

conservative, repressive and suspicious...

Actor

The new emperor has never been to the theater... and shows no interest in music...

Narrator

Leopold detested new ideas and everything that threatened change...

He was terrified by the recent revolutions in America and France... and by the fashionable new way of thinking called...

The Enlightenment...

A few steps from his palace... and from Mozart's apartment... was a building the Emperor especially hated... the private house where Vienna's Freemasons used to meet...

The Freemasons were the center of Enlightened culture in this city...

Actor

We are the angels of humanity!

Narrator

They talked and exchanged ideas...

And worshipped the great thinkers of the time...

like the German Immanuel Kant...

Actor

There is nothing higher than Reason.

Narrator

Or the Frenchman Voltaire...

Actor

Freedom of thought is the life of the soul!

Narrator

Mozart was a devoted Freemason...

Most weeks he crossed the center of the city to take part in meetings and in rituals...

Several times he wrote music for these events...

Through Freemasonry he also made the connections essential to his work...

Sometimes these led to the strangest of places...

In the fall of 1790, just around the corner from the composer's apartment, a certain Mr Müller opened a show of waxworks ... a fake mausoleum... in honor of a national hero who'd died not long before...

There was a glass coffin... and waxwork mourners all around... And at the top was a clock, with a barrel organ in it...

Mozart thought this instrument ridiculous...

Actor

It's boring!... Too childish and high-pitched for my taste...

Narrator

But he needed the money so he wrote a piece for it...

Actor

Splendidly illuminated and open from eight in the morning until eleven at night... this sight will surprise every visitor...

A first class seat costs one florin...

Upon the stroke of every hour a funeral music will be heard...

Music example 3 Sound of clock chiming, the barrel-organ mechanism winding up and then the opening of K594 to bar 20 downbeat, played by wind octet behind the screen (50'')

Narrator

Vienna, in Mozart's day, was alive with entertainments, from waxworks to gambling dens... from zoos to concerts and grand opera...

Actor

The city's greatest festival is Carnival... which begins on the 7th of January and lasts around two months until Ash Wednesday...

Narrator

This was a profitable time of year for a composer...

For the 1791 Carnival Mozart wrote forty-one dances... for which he was paid handsomely...

He considered it trivial work...

Actor

Too much for what I did!... Not enough for what I could have done...

Narrator

What he *could* have done... what he *wanted* to do... was write more works like this new piano concerto...

which he finished on 5th January, just in time for the upcoming celebrations...

Actor

During Carnival there are concerts everywhere...

'Music in so-and-so's rooms', 'Music with trumpets and drums', 'Music by candlelight'...

There are also banquets, and shows and distractions... but most of all...

there's dancing...

Narrator

One of the most popular Carnival entertainments was...

commedia dell'arte... traditional Italian street-theater...

with its stock characters in comic masks...

Upper-class authority figures everyone could laugh at... The hunchback Pulcinello, and the pompous Doctor in his flapping gown...

Lower-class servant types like the charming Columbina... or the devious and resourceful Harlequin in his diamond-patterned costume...

Actor

My dearest father!

This is Carnival time and there is dancing everywhere. I want to go the Ballroom dressed as Harlequin (but not a soul must know)... So please send my Harlequin costume...

Here's my plan... During the last Carnival days we'll collect a company of friends and perform a pantomime, written by me, in the middle of the dance hall...

Narrator

All that survives is a single violin part... and a letter explaining what went on...

Actor

On Carnival Monday our company of masqueraders went to the Ballroom, where we performed a pantomime exactly filling the half-hour intermission in the dancing...

Music example 4
Violin 1

***K446 Endgültige Fassung, No. 1 Scena I
opening to bar 11 2nd beat, double-bar line (15'')
[Pantalon und Columbine zanken sich]***

Actor

My sister-in-law played Columbina...

Music example 5
Violin 1

K446 Endgültige Fassung, No.1 Scena II
bar 13 to bar 16 downbeat (15")
[Columbine ist traurig]

Actor

I was Harlequin, in my costume...

Music example 6
Violin 1

K446 Endgültige Fassung, No.VII
opening to bar 8 downbeat (20")
[Harlequin guckt aus dem Kastern heraus - Allegro]

Actor

My brother-in-law was Pierrot...

Music example 7
Violin 1

K446 Endgültige Fassung, No.VII
bar 45 to bar 48 (15")
[Pierò bewegt sich, Columbine arbeitet - Adagio]

Actor

Our old friend the dancing master played Pantaloon...

Music example 8
Violin 1

K446 Endgültige Fassung, No.1 Scena II
bar 5 to bar 9 downbeat (15")
[Pantalon macht Ceremonien]

Actor

And a painter (Mr Grassi) was the Doctor!

Music example 9
Violin 1

K446 Endgültige Fassung, No.1 Scena II
opening to bar 4 (15")
[Der Dottore kommt - Maestoso]

Actor

The plot and music were mine. The dancing master directed us...
and I must say... the result was charming...

Music example 10
Violin 1

K446 Endgültige Fassung, No.VII
bar 72 to bar 75 (15")

[Arlequin will davon laufen – Allegro assai]

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Narrator

Commedia dell'arte... its characters and stories... deeply influenced European art and music in Mozart's time...

Think of his comic operas... filled with clever and ingenious servants...

Actor

Susanna in 'The Marriage of Figaro'... Leporello in 'Don Giovanni'... the maid Despina in 'Così fan tutte'...

Narrator

All *commedia* figures...

Or the ridiculous lawyers... doctors... and lustful aristocrats in almost every scene...

But *commedia* is not only important in Mozart's operas... You can hear its dramas and its gestures in his symphonies... his string quartets... and most of all... his piano concertos...

Music example 11 **Mvt 1** **bar 1 to bar 5, 2nd beat (10'')**

Narrator

A melody like someone singing... Maybe the innocent and carefree Columbina...

A very different character interrupts...

Music example 12 **bar 5, 3rd beat, to bar 6, 2nd beat (4'')**

Narrator

A fragment of a march?... A soldier?...

A self-important man!...

The first character takes no notice...

Music example 13 **bar 6, 3rd beat, to bar 9, 2nd beat (8')**

Narrator

The second character interrupts again... with exactly what he said before...

Music example 14 ***bar 9, 3rd beat, to bar 10, 2nd beat (4'')***

Narrator

The singer still pays no attention... and completes her song...

Music example 15 ***bar 10, 3rd beat, to bar 13 downbeat (8'')***

Narrator

The result? Dramatic tension... and a sudden clash...

Music example 16 ***bar 13, 2nd beat, to bar 16 downbeat (8'')***

Narrator

This simple pattern... encounter, then collision... is everywhere in this music... and the basis of its drama...

A moment later, we hear a new version of the same idea... The violins pleading... and the flute answering lightheartedly...

Music example 17 ***bar 16, 2nd beat to bar 20 downbeat, WITHOUT 2nd violins... (8'')***

Narrator

The pleading becomes more intense... filled with longing...

Music example 18 ***bar 29 to bar 31, 2nd beat (6'')***

Narrator

And the answer's now more mocking... with a hint of laughter...

Music example 19 ***bar 31, 3rd beat to bar 32 complete (4'')***

Narrator

Without warning... the violin music grows desperate and strange...

Music example 20

bar 33 to bar 35, 2nd beat, WITHOUT 2nd violins and violas (1st violins, cellos and basses only) (6'')

Narrator

What causes this change of mood?

A single note... D flat...

Music example 21

Piano play D flat element (2'')

Instruction to soloist: Play a skeletal snatch of 33-4, clearly emphasising the D flats and the dissonance of this note.

Narrator

Which clashes with the harmony... like the shadow of a pain... and then as quickly... disappears...

Music example 22

Piano play B flat major chord (2'')

Instruction to soloist: Play a skeletal snatch of bar 36, so that the listener hears the plain return of the B flat major harmony.

Narrator

When Mozart's characters engage in conversation... there's often an argument... and then the chorus intervenes... the orchestra... the crowd in the bustling street...

Music example 23

bar 35, 3rd beat to bar 42 complete (15'')

Narrator

Mozart endlessly plays with new characters and encounters...

just like in real *commedia* play...

A cry of anger, for example... might be answered by sweetness and consolation...

Music example 24 **bar 54, 2nd beat to bar 57 downbeat (8")**

Narrator

And at any moment, this simple drama... can suddenly become more complicated and *disturbed* ... before melting back into simplicity again...

Music example 25 **bar 57, 2nd beat to bar 69 downbeat (24")**

Narrator

That brief moment of sadness and darkness... came about the same way as before...

The same wrong note... the same D flat... upset the harmony...

Music example 26 **Piano plays D flat element then B flat (2")**

Instruction to soloist: Play a skeletal version of the harmonic shift from bar 60 into bar 62, emphasising the D flat to D natural resolution.

Narrator

And then resolved back into it again...

In Mozart's theater of sound... encounters take place in many ways... between melodies... colors... different kinds of instruments... or between solo instruments and the orchestra... sounding like a sudden troop of soldiers marching past...

Music example 27 **tutti, bar 22, 2nd beat to bar 26 downbeat (10")**

Narrator

Vienna was the capital of an empire... Every day there were grand events, parades, marches and processions in the street...

And every classical composer used public grandeur to give strength and drama to his music...

Mozart tried many ways of doing this... And sometimes he would change his mind...

Here in this concerto, he first wrote this...

Music example 28 **bar 39 to bar 55, 2nd beat, using old edition and omitting Bärenreiter bars 47-53 (18'')**

Narrator

But then he decided that was not enough... He needed something stronger, grander and more passionate...

So he dropped in an extra 7 bars... He didn't change the score... He just wrote 'NB'... *nota bene*... to remind himself...

Music example 29 **bar 39 to bar 55, 2nd beat, complete Bärenreiter (32'')**

Narrator

Like a theater director, Mozart moves his actors in different combinations round the stage...

And then... almost without warning... he introduces a new performer...

Music example 30 **bar 66 to bar 84, 2nd beat (36'')**

Narrator

The scene has changed... And the actors swap parts with one another... Now the piano sings the gentle melody we heard at the beginning... And the strings take the fanfare that we first heard on the winds and horns...

Music example 31 **bar 84, 3rd beat to bar 106 downbeat (44'')**

Narrator

Mozart wrote this piano part for himself... weaving and dancing around his colleagues in the orchestra... like Harlequin, the character he played in his own pantomime, teasing the other actors in a *commedia* show...

And he performed this music on a fortepiano... quite different from a modern grand... And because the sound was so much gentler... and the room he played in was so small... he asked for 'soloists' in the orchestra... at least while he was playing...

Music example 32

bar 106 from 2nd 16th note (start of solo scale) to bar 122 downbeat, using FORTEPIANO AND SOLO STRINGS where marked (32")

Narrator

There's that strange D flat again...

Music example 33

CONCERT PIANO plays D flat element (2")

Narrator

Upsetting and disturbing the harmony...

Hear how that same passage sounds... on a modern piano

Music example 34

bar 106 from 2nd 16th note (start of scale) to bar 122 downbeat, using piano and fuller strings (32")

Narrator

Like every dramatist, Mozart loved surprises... The unexpected can happen any time... like a door opening into another room...

Music example 35

bar 164 to bar 170 downbeat, piano playing only what is notated in original (13")

Narrator

The piano played almost nothing there... But that's not what Mozart meant... It's only what's he wrote... He was the greatest improviser of his age... and in his

score he added a little curved stroke of the pen... to remind himself to decorate the music... to make it sound perhaps like this...

Music example 36 **bar 164 to bar 174 complete and with piano decorating as soloist sees fit in bars 168-9 (22")**

Narrator

All this playfulness and decoration... is suddenly cut off by the orchestra... with those same passionate seven bars of music... *Nota bene*... that Mozart dropped in as an afterthought before...

Music example 37 **bar 175 to bar 185 downbeat (21")**

Narrator

We have arrived at an ending... familiar characters grouped upon a stage... and waiting for a new scene to begin...

And now there's a change of atmosphere... as though we'd suddenly stepped out of a crowded theater... into the darkness of the street...

Music example 38 **bar 185 to bar 190 (12")**

Narrator

It's strange out here... more threatening... and there's that same disturbing D flat... but this time as part of a very different harmony...

Music example 39 **Piano plays D flat element (3")**

Instruction to soloist: Play the chord progression of 189 to 190, clearly emphasising the C sharp in the middle of the chord. Maybe let the C sharp hang over a fraction at the end.

Actor

Anyone who has witnessed the daytime racket of Vienna, with its crowds of people in the streets, will be astonished how different the city is... at night...

Music example 40 **bar 190 to bar 204, 2nd beat, OMITTING oboe in bars 203-4 (30")**

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Narrator

What was simple now seems a mystery...

Freemasons loved mysteries... and the deep truths they imagined lay behind them... especially in science, philosophy and history...

Actor

The truths of history are now more needed than they ever were in ancient times

Music example 41 **bar 203 to bar 207, oboe and bassoon only (9")**

Narrator

Mozart was discovering history too...

In the library of one of the most powerful patrons in Vienna... he was shown scores of pieces by older composers whose work he hardly knew...

Handel... Bach...

These private encounters with the minds of long dead masters profoundly touched him...

Music example 42 **bar 209 to 212 complete, flute, oboe and bassoon only (8")**

Narrator

In this concerto, scraps and shadows of an older style of music fly past in the orchestra, while Mozart weaves fantastic modern piano sounds around...

This is a different encounter between opposites... On the one hand, deep knowledge of the olden days... On the other, freedom and life lived here and now...

Music example 43 **bar 207 (piano alone in bar 207, ie omitting orchestral downbeat in bar 207, orchestra joining back in in bar 208) to bar 217, downbeat (21")**

Narrator

Echoes of that simple melody from the beginning... and now we get the march-like answer of the second character...

Music example 44 ***bar 217, 3rd beat to bar 221 downbeat, orchestra alone (no piano) (9")***

Narrator

Commedia dell'arte is a comedy of simple types... And every character has a mask, embodying their qualities...

There comes a moment though, when, if we're lucky, we see behind the mask to the real person underneath...

Music example 45 ***bar 225 to bar 235 downbeat (omitting orchestra on last downbeat, apart from tied note on bassoon) (20")***

Narrator

This is when the composer solves the mystery of his drama...

the mystery of that D flat... that keeps appearing and disturbing the surrounding harmony...

Music example 46 ***Piano plays C sharp element into D element (5")***

Instruction to soloist: Play the harmonic move from bar 230 into 231, clearly emphasising the C sharp to D resolution.

Narrator

To use that favorite thought of the Freemasons... This is when the Truth is revealed...

Music example 47 ***bar 235 (including bassoon note on downbeat) to bar 256 (46")***

Narrator

And the Truth has taken us back to the beginning...

But though everything seems the same... It is not...

The characters are not quite where we saw them last... The props have shifted on the stage...

Here's one example... A passage we heard earlier...

Music example 48 **bar 95, 2nd beat, to bar 106 downbeat (24")**

Narrator

Hear what it sounds like now... It begins and ends the same... But the music inbetween has changed...

Music example 49 **bar 256, 2nd beat, to bar 268 downbeat (26")**

Narrator

And that door that earlier swung open now suggests a walk into a different room...

Music example 50 **bar 325 (with decorations in bars 329 and 330) to bar 331 (13")**

Narrator

We have returned to the beginning... but there is doubt and uncertainty... It is time for the main actor... the soloist... to take control...

Music example 51 **bar 347 to bar 357 and through to bar 12 of cadenza (52")**

Narrator

In Mozart's concertos he left unwritten passages in his score...

'Cadenzas'... where he could improvise what came into his head...

In the 20th century someone found a piece of paper on which the composer had scribbled down the cadenzas for this concerto... perhaps to remind himself of what to play in that little room above Jahn's Restaurant...

What this scrap of paper shows... is that as he improvised, Mozart revisited all the different ideas in this music... but the wrong way round... back to front!...

Starting at the end... then arriving at the middle...

Music example 52 **bar 13 of cadenza to bar 15 downbeat (6")**

Narrator

Next he moves to the little fanfare from the opening...

Music example 53 **bar 22 of cadenza to bar 28 (9")**

Narrator

And only at the end...

the innocent melody with which the concerto began...

Music example 54 **bar 33 of cadenza to 2nd quarter note of bar 36 (10")**

Narrator

Mozart must have hoped his audience would catch such playfulness... and be pleased by it...

Actor

My concertos are a happy medium between what is too easy and too difficult...

Narrator

But even he knew not everyone would like what he had written...

Actor

Unfortunately nowadays, in order to win applause one must write stuff so stupid a coachman could sing it... or so unintelligible no sensible person could possibly understand it...

Music example 55

bar 36 of cadenza through bar 358 to end of movement (25”)

Narrator

If the first movement of this concerto reminds us of *commedia dell’arte*...

with its endless dialogues and arguments...

the second... the slow movement... suggests theater of a different kind...

In Mozart’s operas, there are scenes when we meet characters... usually women... on their own...

This is not a comedy of masks... The characters are by themselves... and they tell us what they truly feel...

Like the Countess in ‘The Marriage of Figaro’...

She has just discovered... her husband is unfaithful to her...

Actor

Offer me, O God of Love,
Some consolation for my pain, my sighs...

Either give my treasure back to me
Or let me die...

Music example 56

‘Porgi amor’ (complete) (4’00 approx)